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NAME OF AUTHOR/*NOM DE L'AUTEUR* Myron Johnson

TITLE OF THESIS/*TITRE DE LA THÈSE* The Failure of the CCF in Alberta: An Accident of History?

UNIVERSITY/*UNIVERSITÉ* Alberta

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/*GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE* Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/*ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE DEGRÉ* 1974

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE FAILURE OF THE CCF IN ALBERTA: AN ACCIDENT OF HISTORY?

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT POLITICAL SCIENCE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1974

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE FAILURE OF THE CCF IN ALBERTA: AN ACCIDENT OF HISTORY? submitted by MYRON JOHNSON in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) consistently failed to make a significant impact on Alberta politics. A conventional explanation for this lack of success is that unique of "peculiar" social and economic conditions existed in Alberta which made the failure of a socialist party virtually inevitable. However, several factors, outlined in this thesis, cast such an explanation into serious doubt.

Many of the socio-economic characteristics of Alberta society in the early years of the CCF were the characteristics which have been found to provide fertile ground for socialist parties in other parts of the world. Saskatchewan, a neighboring province which was similar to Alberta in terms of many important social and economic conditions, elected a CCF government. Moreover, Alberta had a radical political tradition, which suggests the province should have been susceptible to a socialist appeal, especially during the depression; the success of the unorthodox United Farmers and Social Credit movements indicates Albertans were not afraid of new and radical political solutions.

This thesis argues that Social Credit and the CCF, though they differed significantly in terms of ideology, were similar in some crucial respects. Both may be viewed as populist parties; and in this respect the success of Social Credit suggests that potential support existed in Alberta for the CCF, rather than the contrary.

A more satisfactory explanation for the failure of the CCF in Alberta is that it was largely political circumstances ("accidents of history"), rather than inherent anti-socialism in the Alberta electorate, which was responsible. This thesis contends that the crucial political circumstance which militated against the CCF in the 1930's was its affiliation to the United Farmers of Alberta. Because of this, it could not organize against the UFA, or even outside the UFA, and because the UFA was already in power, the Alberta CCF could not present itself in 1935 as the logical alternative to the government, as the CCF could in Saskatchewan. The dramatic rise of Social Credit provided the radical alternative to the government in 1935, and stifled the development and progress of the CCF. The success of the Social Credit government further undermined the CCF in subsequent years and the fact that both the CCF and Social Credit appealed to much the same type of voter further undercut whatever potential CCF strength may have existed in Alberta.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. R.E. Baird and Prof. J.A. Eagle, for their time and valuable comments, with special thanks to my committee chairman, Prof. G. Dacks, for his guidance and warmhearted encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis. I also wish to thank Michael Jackson for the provision of quiet study space during the writing of the original draft, and my wife Verna, for her patience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of the CCF in Alberta was a history of failure. Although it was in Alberta that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation came into being, at the 1932 Calgary conference, and it was in Alberta, if anywhere, that the CCF was expected to flourish, Alberta, ironically, was the only province west of Quebec in which the CCF never became a significant political force. Even at its peak, in the 1944 provincial election, the CCF won only 25 per cent of the vote and two seats; its support declined steadily from then until it was superseded by the New Democratic Party in 1961.

What accounts for the failure of the CCF in Alberta? That is the central question examined in this thesis, and it raises a number of related secondary questions. Can the CCF failure be explained largely by a unique political culture and peculiar social and economic conditions in Alberta, or was it due more to political circumstances--what might be called "accidents of history?" Was Alberta inherently anti-socialistic, or could a socialist movement have succeeded if the political circumstances (rather than social or economic conditions) had been different? Was it the success of Social Credit which effectively cut off and stifled the development of the CCF, or would the CCF have failed even if the Aberhart movement had not sprung up? These questions require careful consideration.

Clearly the political culture of Alberta provided an

environment in which a Social Credit movement could thrive (see Chapter II). What is less clear is whether the CCF could also have thrived in such an environment. Scholars who have studied Alberta society in the 1930's do not all agree on that point, although it is not uncommon to find the view, either implied or expressed, that the CCF failure was virtually inevitable because the political culture was not conducive to socialism. Irving is one who expressly states this conclusion at the end of his study of Social Credit.

> In the light, then of the conditions that existed in Alberta, as well as of Aberhart's actual capacities and personality, it was inevitable that a Social Credit rather than a socialist movement would prevail. This conclusion is confirmed by the historical fact that socialism was, in reality, an alternative to Social Credit in 1935. While it is true that socialism appeared as such an alternative only within the equivocal context of the U.F.A. movement, it was still an alternative. Surely the inability of socialist ideas to revitalize the decaying U.F.A. movement may be adduced in further support of our argument.
>
> Indeed, for well over two decades following its disengagement from the U.F.A. in 1938, the C.C.F. was unable to make headway against the Social Credit movement. The perennial failure of the C.C.F. in the province of its birth to defeat the Social Credit party may be taken as a final justification of our view that not even Aberhart could have led a socialist movement to victory in 1935.[1]

Although Irving presents no evidence to substantiate this view (it is only peripheral to his study), the electoral evidence certainly seems, at least on the surface, to lend considerable weight to it. The electoral history of the CCF was one of almost consistent failure. In 1935, the United Farmers of Alberta provincial government, which was affiliated to the CCF, was crushed by Social Credit, and not a single UFA member was returned to the Legislature. In the

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[1] J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 345-6.

federal election later that year, the CCF was again wiped out by Social Credit, and several prominent and highly respected UFA MP's, including William Irvine and Robert Gardiner, were among those defeated. Subsequent elections told a similar story. Federally, the CCF never won a single seat in Alberta, nor did the popular vote ever reach 20 per cent, even in the 1945 election. Indeed, in every election from 1949 to 1958, it failed to reach 10 per cent.

The provincial picture was almost as bleak. The CCF was not represented in the Legislature until a surprise by-election win by Elmer Roper in Edmonton in 1942. The party went on to poll 25 per cent of the vote in 1944, but only elected two members--one from each of the multiple-member ridings of Edmonton and Calgary. The party continued to hold that number of seats through three subsequent elections, although by 1955 the two urban seats had been lost and two rural seats picked up. Moreover, the popular vote dropped with each election, until by 1959, the last election contested by the CCF, the vote dropped below five per cent, and the party failed to win a single seat.

TABLE I

FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR THE CCF IN ALBERTA
IN PER CENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE

Year:	1935	1940	1945	1949	1953	1957	1958
% vote:	13	13	18	9	7	6	4

TABLE II

PROVINCIAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR THE CCF IN ALBERTA
IN VOTES AND SEATS

Year:	1935	1940	1944	1948	1952	1955	1959
% vote:	11	11	25	19	14	8	5
No. seats:	0	0	2	2	2	2	0

This electoral evidence shows the CCF did not take root in Alberta, but it does not prove that the CCF could not have taken root. Further evidence, of a different nature, is needed to prove or disprove this contention. It is important, therefore, to consider the CCF in light of both Social Credit in Alberta and the CCF in Saskatchewan.

There is general agreement that Social Credit was so successful because it suited Alberta--it fit the prevailing social and economic conditions both in terms of leadership and of doctrine. It appeared at the right time led by the right man who used the right techniques, offered the right explanations and promised the right solutions. The reasons behind the success of Social Credit are further elaborated on in Chapter II.

Once Social Credit was established, it changed as Alberta changed, and was able to continue to appeal so broadly that it became the one major party in Alberta.

However, this does not answer the question of CCF failure. What is in dispute is whether the CCF failed to take root because it did not "fit" Alberta (specifically, that Albertans had a deep-seated aversion to socialism), or whether the failure was largely

the result of Social Credit success--that is, whether the CCF movement might have been successful if no Social Credit movement had arisen and established itself.

It is a central contention of this thesis that the CCF failed utterly to take root in Alberta not primarily because of anti-socialist sentiment among the electorate, but for two basic reasons: because Social Credit happened to arise (not inevitably arose) in Alberta at a crucial time, capturing potential support which might otherwise have gone to the CCF; and because the CCF was trapped by political circumstances--its association with the United Farmers of Alberta--which retarded its development and undercut its appeal to a degree which proved fatal.

This thesis rests on the presumption that Social Credit and the CCF, while ideologically rather different, were similar in some significant respects; and more importantly, that they were regarded as similar by many people and indeed, to a considerable extent, were supported by the same type of people.

This thesis contends that the Social Credit party and the CCF, whatever else they may have stood for, both embodied a common strain of populism upon which a good measure of their strength and appeal rested. Although it is not easy to define, this populism was characterized by a prevailing sense of grievance; by a mistrust and dislike of established interests--business, financial and political; by a sense of exploitation by those interests, and by a feeling that power resided not with the common people of western Canada but with the privileged of eastern Canada. This feeling was rather widespread in western Canada. It was to this sense of alienation and frustration which

both Social Credit and the CCF appealed and in which they found their strength. And to that extent, they were populist parties.

Of course the CCF was more than merely a populist party; it was also a socialist party. Nevertheless, its primary source of strength lay not in a doctrinaire socialist analysis of society or promise of a Marxist utopia, but in its promise of a better deal and a new approach to cope with the problems of the day. Thus, while it is almost certainly true Albertans would have rejected doctrinaire Marxist socialism even in the midst of the depression, it does not follow that they would have rejected the CCF brand of populist-socialism.

To sustain such a thesis, it is necessary to show that Alberta was not demonstrably anti-socialist, or at least that the CCF message of left-wing populism could have appealed to many non-socialist elements in Alberta society; that the conditions which gave rise to Social Credit might have given rise to socialism; and that there were important political circumstances which militated against the CCF, and which were significant in explaining the ultimate CCF failure.

The thesis that Alberta was not inherently anti-socialist, or at least that Albertans would have accepted a CCF socialist wolf in populist garb, rests on a number of bases.

The first argument is that the nature of Alberta society in 1935 was such that, in light of what is known about the electoral basis of left-wing support generally, there is good reason to believe the CCF could have been successful in Alberta.

Secondly, a comparison of Alberta, where Social Credit came

to power, and Saskatchewan, where the CCF was eventually successful, suggests that the similarities between the two provinces in terms of their economic and social makeup were more significant that the differences, and that political circumstances, rather than social and economic differences, may have been the crucial difference in determining the fate of the CCF and Social Credit in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The third major argument is that Alberta's history before 1935 (in respect to both the agrarian and labor elements of society) was radical in nature and should have made Albertans rather susceptible to a CCF type of appeal.

Finally, a consideration of voter perceptions of Social Credit indicates that Social Credit was regarded as radical and that voter confusion existed over the ideological nature of Social Credit. Voting evidence, the initial CCF response to Social Credit, Social Credit in Saskatchewan, and a comparison of Social Credit promises with the CCF platform, lend weight to the view that Albertans were not inherently averse to what the CCF represented.

The political circumstances or "accidents of history" to which this thesis attributes the CCF failure was the fact that the CCF was linked to the UFA in 1935, and was dragged down when the UFA was crushed. The CCF suffered the misfortune of being tied to a tired government which had failed to cope with the depression and was rocked by scandal. The failure of the UFA, and the CCF association with it, allowed Social Credit to win office and establish itself. This is essentially the view espoused by Young.

> In Alberta there was no provincial CCF. The United Farmers of Alberta affiliated with the CCF in 1932 and, therefore, repre-

> sented that party in the provincial field. When the United Farmers were defeated in 1935 they pulled the CCF down with them, never to rise again in that province. Thus there occurred the curious phenomenon of two provinces, side by side, sharing economic, geographic and, to some extent, cultural characteristics, but with governments that espoused political views at almost opposite ends of the ideological spectrum.[2]

The major focus of this thesis is on the period around 1935. Chapter II provides some historical background of events leading up to 1935, an overview of the Social Credit victory in Alberta, and an assessment of the reasons for that success. Chapter III looks at the social and economic conditions in Alberta in 1935 and considers the prospects for success for a socialist party like the CCF, in light of what is known about left-wing voting. It also deals with the conditions in Saskatchewan which gave rise to the CCF success, and relates the situation to Alberta. Chapter IV discusses Alberta's radical past and the degree to which Social Credit was a radical movement. Although the material in Chapter IV might seem to follow logically from Chapter II, it introduces new material which is only fully understood when considered in relation to the material in Chapter III. Hence it is dealt with separately from Chapter II. Chapter V details the political circumstances which militated against the CCF (essentially, the links between the UFA and CCF) in 1935, and Chapter VI follows up with the failure of the CCF to replace Social Credit in the years subsequent to 1935. In Chapter VII, the concluding chapter, there is a summation of evidence and a restatement of the central thesis.

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[2] W. D. Young, Democracy and Discontent (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 80.

CHAPTER II

ALBERTA'S POLITICAL HISTORY AND SOCIAL CREDIT

To understand the failure of the CCF in Alberta, it is necessary to have some understanding of the success of the Social Credit movement. We should therefore give some consideration to the rise of Social Credit, what it represented, and why it was successful. A very brief look at Alberta's political past up to 1935 will help set the stage; an assessment of the radical and "peculiar" aspects of Alberta's history is presented further in the thesis, in Chapter IV.

Before the formation of the province of Alberta in 1905, the territorial government of the North-West Territories was essentially non-partisan in nature--rather similar in this respect to the "business" municipal governments common to prairie cities even today. Although there was a nominal division by parties at the federal level in 1896, "even after 1896 there was little disposition to allow federal political distinctions to filter down into discussions of territorial issues."[1]

Partisanship was injected into Alberta politics at the granting of provincial status, when the Liberal Laurier administration at Ottawa appointed a Liberal, G.H.V. Bulyea, as Lieutenant-Governor, who in turn, in September of that year, called on a Liberal, A.C.

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[1] David E. Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Feb., 1969), p. 18.

Rutherford, to head the first government. Thus, a Liberal administration had been in office two months when the first election was called: and with the political advantages which normally lie with a governing party, especially a new one with no past mistakes to justify and no record to defend, the Liberals won handily, taking 22 of 25 seats.

The Liberals again won a strong majority over the Conservatives in the election of 1909, but by the following year the government found itself embroiled in the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway scandal, a serious matter which involved government allocation of railway contracts.[2] The result was the desertion of a number of Liberal MLA's and the resignation of Premier Rutherford. At this point, the Conservatives anticipated, with some justification, that they would replace the Liberals at the next election. Unfortunately for the Conservatives, during the three years which intervened before the next provincial election, two factors worked against them: Rutherford's replacement, A.L. Sifton, established himself as an able premier; and there was a federal election in which the Liberals supported reciprocity, popular in the West, and the Conservatives backed protectionism. As a result, in the 1913 election two-thirds of the seats stayed Liberal and one-third went Conservative. In 1917, although they suffered a slight decline in support, the Liberals again won a majority, and the Conservatives failed to improve their standing.

It was in that 1917 election that rumblings of discontent with the old-line parties began to be expressed electorally, for in

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[2] Ibid., p. 20.

addition to one Labor member and two Soldiers' representatives, two members of the radical Non-Partisan League were elected. Shortly after the election, Sifton resigned to enter federal politics and was replaced as premier by Charles Stewart.[3]

The Liberal period of rule ended in 1921 when the United Farmers of Alberta, engaging in electoral politics for the first time, captured two-thirds of the seats and formed the government, even though the Liberals actually ran more candidates and polled more votes than the UFA. Farmers' grievances against eastern domination aggravated by a post-war depression, a general distrust of partyism heightened by Non-Partisan League activity, the formation of a Unionist government at Ottawa and its subsequent "betrayal" of prairie farmers on the Conscription issue, as well as the Liberal Party split on Conscription, all contributed to the farmers' support for the "non-political" UFA, with its doctrines of non-partyism, group government and economic co-operation. That the radicalism was not confined solely to the rural areas is indicated by the election of four Labor MLA's in 1921; no more than one Labor representative had been elected in any previous election.

Premier Herbert Greenfield headed the UFA government until 1925, when, at the request of the caucus, he turned over the leadership to John Brownlee. Brownlee led the UFA to two further victories in 1926 and 1930; on both occasions the UFA maintained its hold on roughly two-thirds of the seats, and Labor won a handful each time. Throughout this period, the Liberals remained the largest (if relatively weak) opposition group in the Legislature. The UFA government remained

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[3]For a good account of this period of Liberal Rule, see L.G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

generally free of serious criticism until the early 1930's, when the combined impact of the depression and a series of scandals left them politically shaken. A belated change of premiers--R.G. Reid replaced Brownlee in 1934--did little to shore up their defences. It was a vulnerable government which was forced to face the Social Credit challenge in 1935.

The federal picture roughly paralleled the provincial during this period. The Liberals and Conservatives split the federal seats in 1908, the Liberals won all but one in 1911, and the Unionist government took all but one in 1917. The UFA was the dominant federal party from 1921 through 1930, although the popular vote dropped off somewhat after the 1921 sweep. Nevertheless, the UFA was in a position of dominance in Alberta, both federally and provincially, at the beginning of 1935.

Yet in August, 1935, the UFA was wiped out as an effective political force in Alberta, swept from office provincially by the strange new Social Credit movement; and later that year suffered the same fate federally at the hands of Social Credit. Not one UFA member survived.

* * *

From where had this new political force sprung, and how was it able to win office in its first attempt at electoral politics?

Although theories of social credit which originated with Major C.H. Douglas were popularized in Alberta by certain UFA members (notably William Irvine) in the 1920's, there was no social credit movement in Canada until 1932 when William Aberhart was converted to

social credit and began to introduce political doctrine into his Sunday religious broadcasts.[4]

Aberhart, a high school principal in Calgary and leader of a fundamentalist religious organization called the Prophetic Bible Institute, had begun preaching on a Calgary radio station in 1925. His audience grew rapidly, and at its height numbered over 300,000 including listeners in parts of Saskatchewan, B.C., and U.S. border states, as well as much of Alberta. At first, Aberhart showed little concern with economic or political matters; but as the depression wore on, he began to ponder economic questions, and when he was introduced to social credit in 1932, he quickly accepted it as the "revealed word" on the economic ills of society.

The theory of social credit was essentially one of economic reform. According to social credit, the real enemies of society were the "financial interests" and big business, both controlled in eastern Canada, who perverted the free enterprise system. An essential element of social credit analysis was the famous A plus B theorem, which argued that under the existing system of production, the amount of money distributed in the course of production always fell short of the amount needed to purchase all of the goods produced.[5]

The solution was for the people to regain control of the financial system, reduce the burden of debt, and increase the flow of money. One way to do this was through the issuance of provincial

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[4]W.D. Young, Democracy and Discontent (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 81.

[5]For a good analysis of the A plus B theorem, see C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), Chapter 4.

currency. The system of private property ownership need not be altered. Although social credit theory, particularly the A plus B theorem, was ridiculed by economists as simplistic and unworkable, the promise of a dividend to consumers to make up for insufficient purchasing power in the economy seemed eminently reasonable during the depression to many Albertans who lacked money to buy available goods.

Such was the theory that Aberhart began to mix into his religious broadcasts. However, Aberhart did not confine his activities to radio. During that winter and through 1933, Aberhart and E.C. Manning (a young graduate of the Institute) formed study groups in Calgary, spoke to meetings and circulated pamphlets. During the summer of 1933, Aberhart and Manning were constantly touring southern Alberta, and usually attracted overflow crowds.[6]

Although Aberhart preached social credit, he did not fully understand the theory as set forth by Douglas, and Aberhart's deviations from the Douglas doctrine caused a rift between the two men. However, when Douglas visited Alberta in 1934 to set Albertans on the true course, it was Douglas who was rejected and Aberhart whom the people supported. Aberhart was in firm control of the movement in Alberta.[7]

Some attempt was made to have social credit adopted by the existing political parties. The UFA government in particular was subjected to pressure from rank-and-file supporters (many of whom were attracted to monetary reform ideas) to investigate social credit.

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[6] Young, Democracy and Discontent, p. 85.

[7] Ibid., pp. 85-6.

Both Aberhart and Douglas appeared before the Alberta legislature in 1934 during hearings on social credit doctrine, but the government was not impressed with the arguments of either man, and did nothing to implement any social credit scheme.[8]

Aberhart may have been considering independent political action for some time, but the turning point came in January, 1935, when the UFA convention refused to adopt social credit theories. At that point, the social credit movement became a political movement seeking power. The organization work continued on up to the August election campaign, and the campaign itself, though involving the efforts of many people, was carefully controlled by Aberhart who, among other things, selected all candidates. The tremendous enthusiasm for Aberhart and his Social Credit ideas throughout nearly all of Alberta became increasingly evident as the campaign progressed. The other parties' messages were lost in the uproar. And when the votes were counted, Social Credit had won an overwhelming victory, with 54 per cent of the vote and 56 of 63 seats. The old UFA government had been swept away, retaining only 11 per cent of the vote; and the opposition was reduced to a handful, two Conservatives and five Liberals. Virtual one-party rule was reinstated. Aberhart himself did not run in the election, but he was selected premier and won a seat in a byelection shortly thereafter.

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How does one explain the success of the social credit movement? This question is somewhat peripheral to our central thesis, but it may

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[8] Ibid., p. 87.

be useful to consider the question at some length as it provides a useful framework and background to the study.

Probably the most elaborate theoretical explanation of Alberta society and Social Credit is provided by C.B. Macpherson,[9] although his views should be considered in conjunction with other studies of Social Credit.

Macpherson rests his argument on the assumption that Alberta is (or was in 1935) a relatively homogeneous society. It was largely a one-class society, and that class was petit-bourgeois in outlook. Macpherson says that while Alberta had a somewhat diversified economy, it was primarily agricultural. Moreover, not only the farmers, but other essentially rural people (village and small-town residents) in Alberta shared a common petit-bourgeois position and hence a common outlook.

Alberta's economy, according to Macpherson, has two essential features which co-exist but which are in some respects contradictory. On the one hand, Macpherson maintains, the typical prairie producer is an independent operator of an individual or family enterprise. Hence, Alberta's people have preponderantly the outlook and assumptions of small-propertied independent commodity producers,[10] including a (largely illusory) sense of independence. At the same time, Alberta is in a quasi-colonial position, since its economy is subordinate to an outside economy.

This contradiction has resulted in a rather strange political

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[9] C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953).

[10] Ibid., p. x.

reaction. The Alberta farmer becomes, at one and the same time, an agrarian radical and a petit-bourgeois individualist. Partly because of Alberta's subordination to an eastern economy (quasi-colonial status) and partly because of Alberta's position as a debtor community, Alberta radicalism has taken the form of an anti-establishment, anti-eastern and anti-business and finance protest; and further, the problem of debt favorably disposed Albertans toward monetary cures.[11]

What we mean by radicalism in this context was a willingness to reject traditional patterns and methods and habits in favor of new and unorthodox forms of political, social and economic arrangements.

Politically, this radicalism manifested itself in a rejection both of the traditional parties and indeed of the traditional party system, and the election of two governments, Social Credit and the UFA, whose philosophies were considered at least unorthodox in much of the rest of Canada. Economically, this radicalism manifested itself (as has been noted) in a predisposition toward monetary reform, and a willingness to turn to co-operative retail ventures and co-operative forms of marketing, and an acceptance of government intervention (perhaps even a demand for such intervention) to a degree necessary to protect the family farm through establishment of produce marketing boards, farm subsidies and adequate transportation facilities.

At the same time, the petit-bourgeois nature of the economy has imposed limits to the radicalism, specifically in respect to property rights and the free enterprise system. This limit was evident both in the UFA and Social Credit movements.

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[11] Ibid., p. 148.

> The basic limits of UFA radicalism are to be found in the minds of the leaders and movement alike, in their acceptance of the prevailing system of property rights.[12]

The contradictory aspects of the economy also account, in Macpherson's view, for the oscillation between conservatism and radicalism in the Alberta agrarian protest movements, and in the population as a whole. Times of economic crisis bring the radicalism to the fore with a new protest movement; times of prosperity are times when the rock-ribbed conservatism of the petit-bourgeois is in command.

One further important result of the economic anomaly described is the lack of an alternate party system. Macpherson makes much of the "non-party" tradition in Alberta. A party system was imposed on Alberta in 1905, Macpherson says, because the federal parties needed a provincial organization to win seats. But 1921 marked a return to the non-party tradition and 1935 represented a continuation of that tradition.[13]

In Macpherson's view, two characteristics of Alberta combined to discourage the development of a two-party system. The first, a relatively homogeneous class composition, made an alternate party system unnecessary (he says, for example, that "labour was not a potential source of any great strength because it was a relatively small part of the Alberta economy");[14] and the second, a quasi-colonial status, left Albertans positively averse to the "corrupt" eastern-based and financed party system. In a province with a quasi-

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[12] Ibid., p. 219.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 229.

colonial economy, one of the primary requirements of the provincial political system is that it stand up to the national government. "A provincial party system in which each of the alternate parties was a subordinate section of a federal party had nothing to commend it as a weapon against the central government."[15] Thus there was antipathy to the party system.

Macpherson's thesis has been subjected to some criticism, and it may be useful to consider this briefly before proceeding to an assessment of social credit in the light of that theory.

It is our view that there are some weaknesses in Macpherson's analysis of Alberta society, although his assessment of the rise of Social Credit is on reasonably firm ground.

One of the major problems is that Macpherson assumes a great degree of homogeneity and community of interest and outlook without demonstrating it. In fact, the situation (see Chapter III) was as follows: Only slightly more than half the population of Alberta lived on farms, and not only the size of farms, but the type of farming, varied considerably. Mixed farming, cattle ranching and wheat farming all existed in Alberta, and their degree of dependence on world markets varied. Besides, as Macpherson himself admits, Alberta did have oil and coal; and though organized labor was not large, neither was it insignificant. Clearly wage earners were not independent commodity producers, nor were most of Alberta's urban population.

Neither was the Social Credit victory as massive an indication of support throughout the province, nor of absence of opposition party support, as Macpherson would have us believe. For despite the

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[15] Ibid., p. 21.

overwhelming majority and tremendous popular enthusiasm, the popular vote for Social Credit in 1935 was 54 per cent. It was an electoral system weighted in favor of the leading party, as much as a rejection of the party system, which accounts for the huge majority.

Finally, there is little evidence presented that farmers, villagers and townspeople voted Social Credit because they shared a common petit-bourgeois outlook. This is simply assumed by Macpherson.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that Macpherson is correct in much of his assessment of Aberhart's Social Credit message and its appeal to Albertans. The doctrine focused on monetary [illegible] and defined the enemy as the finanacial interests. Control over finance would be removed from those interests and returned to the people, and the debt burden would be relieved. At the same time, social credit would not disturb property rights. The farmer was promised salvation without relinquishing his petit-bourgeois position, his "independence." The puritanical morality associated with evangelical religion would have suited the conservative side of the farmer's nature. This type of appeal might well be expected to win favor with village and town residents as well. Finally, the fact that Social Credit was presented as an educational movement and did not seek office until social credit ideas had been rejected by the UFA, and that it was an indigenous party rather than a branch of a federal party, fit the anti-party feeling of Alberta.

Macpherson also notes the crucial importance of the depression to Social Credit.

> The depths of sudden poverty and insecurity to which almost the whole community had been reduced by the drop in the prices of the goods they produced, and by the consequently overwhelming problem of farm debt, had created an extraordinarily receptive

> and responsive audience for social credit doctrine. The fact that social credit could be presented not only as a monetary device but as an economic theory and a social philosophy made it doubly attractive; not only did it promise economic relief, it also could provide an explanation of the apparently senseless catastrophic world in which more and more Albertans found themselves groping for understanding and hope.[16]

This, too, is the thrust of Irving's argument.[17] Though he essentially agrees with Macpherson, Irving's focus is on Aberhart's personality, organizational ability, and use of radio. He emphasizes the psychological aspects of the movement and says of Albertans that Social Credit brought order into their confused world and helped people cope with the depression.[18] Mann emphasizes the importance of Aberhart's religious appeal,[19] and to David Smith, "the absence of an alternate party in Alberta after 1921 did more to create an environment conducive to accepting social credit than any other influence in that society."[20] Although Smith's argument is highly questionable, the others present important perspectives which add to an understanding of Social Credit. Neatby draws together these themes and sums up the rise of Social Credit.

> The Alberta election of 1935 was clearly a remarkable conjuncture of events: an economic crisis, a political vacuum, the intervention of a dynamic evangelist in politics.[21]

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[16] Ibid., pp. 144-5.

[17] J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

[18] Ibid., pp. 337-8.

[19] W.E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), p. x.

[20] Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments....", p. 24.

[21] H.B. Neatby, The Politics of Chaos (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), p. 144.

The economic crisis was the depression, and its impact on a debt-ridden society which depended on world markets for much of its income. The political vacuum was caused by a discredited government, and the lack of a strong opposition (itself in part a result of a distrust of the party system), and the failure of another political movement to arise. And the dynamic evangelist was Aberhart, with his mixture of three "r's"--radio, religion and rhetoric--combined with a forceful personality and a political and economic doctrine borrowed but adapted to Alberta.

The Social Credit message to Albertans was so appealing because it explained the depression in understandable and sympathetic terms, it helped remove guilt feelings by shifting blame from farmers to a familiar enemy (eastern financial interests), and it promised action to remedy the situation which did not threaten the farmer's property rights. In short, it promised security with freedom. If some of the promises of Aberhart and some of the enthusiasm of his followers seems unrealistic in retrospect, it must be recalled that for many the depression was a time of despair, and even those who might normally have been skeptical would more likely have been receptive to such an appeal during the depression.

The new movement, moreover, was trusted as old-fashioned politics was not. It was not really political, but was what has been called "a crusade beyond politics". In addition, Social Credit was seen as an honest alternative, led by a religious man, a man of the people, who, as a radio evangelist, was both known and trusted. There was an evangelical fervor in Alberta which made at least part of the population susceptible to Aberhart's curious mixture of

religion and politics. And finally there was Aberhart himself--the tireless worker, the successful organizer, the skillful politician, the persuader, the orator, and (when the need arose), the manipulator.

However, the fact that conditions were almost ideal in Alberta for a Social Credit movement to flourish does not necessarily indicate that a socialist movement inevitably would have failed in Alberta. Indeed, this thesis argues the contrary theory is more plausible--that the fact of Social Credit success can more easily be interpreted as evidence that a basis for socialism existed in Alberta. This can be argued from two directions. Firstly, the argument is made in Chapter III that the conditions which gave rise to Social Credit in 1935 are precisely the sort of conditions which might be expected to spawn a socialist movement. Secondly, Chapter IV attempts to demonstrate that Social Credit and the CCF were not diametrically opposed, but in fact shared far more similarities than differences, and were both making radical appeals against established interests. It is to these themes we now turn.

CHAPTER III

POTENTIAL FOR A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

One explanation for the failure of the CCF in Alberta is that peculiar social and economic conditions created a mental outlook in the Alberta voter which would have made it difficult if not impossible for a socialist party to establish itself in such a province. A contrary explanation is that the CCF failure resulted primarily from the political circumstances, not the social and economic conditions. A crucial question in assessing the validity of these competing claims is whether or not Alberta was inherently anti-socialist.

It is the contention of this thesis that Alberta was not peculiarly anti-socialist, at least no more anti-socialist than other regions where socialist movements were eventually successful, and certainly not so anti-socialist that, if political circumstances had been different, the CCF could not have been successful with a practical non-doctrinaire approach focusing on economic problems of concern to the Alberta voter. Indeed, in our assessment, the evidence suggests that Alberta should have been susceptible to a left-wing appeal.

One of the chief reasons for such a belief is that the socio-economic composition of Alberta in the 1930's was similar to that of other societies which gave rise to socialism elsewhere.

To develop the argument, this thesis draws a socio-economic

profile of Alberta. This profile is then examined in light of what is known about the bases of left-wing support generally.

Secondly, the argument is reinforced by comparing the situation in Alberta, where the CCF failed, to that of Saskatchewan, where it eventually succeeded. Both the similarities and differences between the two provinces are presented and assessed.

Thirdly, this thesis considers the rise to power of the CCF in Saskatchewan, and attempts to show the political circumstances were an important factor in the victory, perhaps as crucial as social and economic conditions.

* * *

What kind of society was Alberta in the 1930's? What social and economic conditions prevailed during the political unrest of that decade? Broadly speaking, Alberta's three most salient features were that it was largely agricultural; that, more than any other province, it was a rapidly expanding frontier society; and particularly important in light of the two other conditions, it was in the midst of a severe depression.

Alberta's rapidly increasing population had reached 732,000 by 1931, double the 1911 figure and ten times the 1901 population.[1] The province was predominantly rural, perhaps even more than the 62 per cent figure listed in the census would indicate.

While 51 per cent of Alberta residents lived on farms, only 22 per cent of the population lived in the two larger cities, Edmonton

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[1] Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. 1, p. 578.

and Calgary.[2] Thus, 27 per cent of the population lived in rural non-farm communities, hamlets, villages, towns and small cities, most of which depended on agriculture, to a greater or lesser extent, for economic survival; and it may be that many of these people, particularly in the smaller communities, were similar to the farmers in their social and political outlook.

Alberta's economy, as the population figures indicate, was predominantly agricultural. In 1931, fully 56 per cent of the employed adult male population was engaged in farming. While wheat was the major crop in Alberta, the Alberta economy was not as overwhelmingly dependent on wheat as was that of Saskatchewan; beef cattle in the foothills and mixed farming in substantial portions of Alberta reduced somewhat the importance of wheat.

For example, in Alberta in 1930, wheat accounted for 42 per cent of the total farm product value; other field crops (including oats, barley, hay and forage) accounted for 25 per cent, and animals and animal products, 33 per cent. In Saskatchewan, the figures were 48 per cent wheat, 23 per cent other field crops, and 29 per cent animals.[3] Nonetheless, wheat was a major commodity in the economy of both provinces.

Alberta's farms in 1931 were in the main owned by the farmer. Seventy-three per cent were fully-owned and another 15 per cent partly-owned (this often meant the farmer was renting additional acreage for pasture, in addition to a fully-owned homestead). Only 12 per cent

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[2] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 578, 542.

[3] Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. 8, pp. 588-9, 660-1.

of the farmers were solely renters.[4]

Agriculture, though the predominant occupation, was by no means the only one. Roughly 44 per cent of the working population was outside agriculture. For example, coal mining had been a factor in the province's economy since its early days, and mining was still significant enough in 1931 to employ nearly four per cent of the adult male population. Transportation (primarily railways) employed another six per cent, manufacturing nearly six per cent, construction work and labor another 10 per cent, and business, finance and service industries 15 per cent.[5]

Although the labor force was fairly small, labor was reasonably well organized in Alberta. Union membership in 1931 totalled 20,000 (as compared with less than 9,000 in Saskatchewan.)[6] This is only 15 per cent of the non-agricultural working force of 140,000, but it should be remembered this latter figure includes the entire range of workers outside farming, including businessmen and professionals. Calgary and Edmonton accounted for about half the organized workers in Alberta.[7]

Although the preceding gives a sense of the type of economy, it misses an essential feature of Alberta's character in the 1930's--Alberta's youth and consequent "frontier" character. Morton sums up that aspect well.

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[4] Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. 1, p. 525.

[5] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 771.

[6] Labour Organizations in Canada, 1931 (Ottawa: Canadian Department of Labour, 1931), p. 239.

[7] Ibid., p. 239.

> Alberta was the frontier of frontiers, the outermost limit of arable land on the continent. Between 1911 and 1916 it was still absorbing the last great wave of immigration in the history of North American settlement.... The characteristic frontier malaise of debt, dislocation and restlessness was active in the province. All these factors were aggravated by physical factors. Alberta was the last frontier by virtue of distance from the original centers of settlement. Distance meant increased freight charges, an intensified sense of being at the mercy of remote metropolitan powers, the bankers of Montreal, the grain buyers of Winnipeg, the politicians of Ottawa. These were the conditions of an exaggerated sectionalism. And to sharpen tempers already touchy, there were added the agricultural hazards of drought in the south and of frost in the north of the province. The intensification of the strains of a pioneer economy and a frontier community was not offset by solidarity of political and social traditions. Alberta's population was made up almost equally of three groups: native Canadians, British immigrants, and American immigrants. The result was that the British-Ontario political tradition did not establish itself easily or firmly in Alberta.[8]

Morton's comments are better appreciated in light of statistics regarding the ethnic make-up of the population. Compared to Canada as a whole, Alberta had a much greater ethnic mix. The major group in 1931 in terms of racial origin was British, 53 per cent, roughly the same proportion as in Canada as a whole. Germans made up 10 per cent (compared to four per cent in Canada), Ukrainians eight per cent (three per cent in Canada), and Scandinavians eight per cent (two per cent in Canada). French comprised only five per cent, compared to 30 per cent in Canada.[9]

Perhaps even more significant are the figures on the immigrant population. Alberta's population contained a greater percentage of foreign-born residents and aliens than any other province, and the immigrants were later arrivals. For example, in 1931, only 58 per cent of the population was born in Canada, with 15 per cent British-

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[8] W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), pp. 37-8.

[9] Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. 1, pp. 168-9.

born and 27 per cent foreign-born.[10] (British-born were not included in the foreign-born category). Saskatchewan's population was 24 per cent foreign-born, the second highest in Canada. The importance of the American influence in Alberta has frequently been noted. Significantly, 11 per cent of Alberta's population was U.S.-born. This is the highest figure for any province, and compares with eight per cent in Saskatchewan and three per cent in Canada as a whole.[11] The importance of the American element in terms of leadership may have been even more important, for as Morton notes, the 1918 executive and Board of Directors of the UFA was composed of eight American-born, five Canadian-born, five British-born, and one New Zealand-born.[12]

Immigrants account for 42 per cent of Alberta's 1931 population (double the national figure), and aliens 12 per cent. Moreover, they were late arrivals. Overall, 32 per cent arrived after 1920 and fully 38 per cent of the Ukrainian immigration to Alberta occurred after 1920. Comparable figures for Saskatchewan are 27 per cent and 29 per cent, and for Canada as a whole considerably lower still.[13]

To sum up, Alberta's population compared to the country as a whole was late settling, more heavily foreign-born and alien, more heavily American, more heavily British-born, and more heavily Ukrainian, Scandinavian and German.

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[10] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 173-4.

[11] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 174.

[12] Morton, Progressive Party in Canada, p. 39.

[13] Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 794.

Another interesting feature of Alberta's society at the time was its religious unorthodoxy, which was probably in part a result of the unsettled conditions outlined. As Mann notes in his study of religious groups in Alberta, Alberta has had an "exceptional history of religious non-conformity, a history without contemporary parallel among the provinces of Canada."[14] Mann claims that in 1946, about 20 per cent of Alberta's population belonged to unorthodox religious movements, and that there were some 50 unorthodox religious groups (in addition to the traditional churches) active in Alberta.[15]

On the surface, Mann seems to overemphasize the unorthodoxy of Alberta's religious scene. After all, in 1931 Alberta's four largest Protestant churches accounted for 444,000 of the province's 732,000 population, or roughly 60 per cent.[16] Roman Catholics made up a surprisingly large 23 per cent. If one subtracts Greek Orthodox (three per cent) and Baptist (four per cent),[17] that leaves only 10 per cent which could be called unorthodox--not a terribly high figure. However, these figures may be somewhat misleading. For if we are discussing fundamentalism, a good part of the Baptist church could be included. Moreover, Mann indicates that a significant number of nominal members of establishment Protestant churches may in fact have been strongly influenced by the fundamentalist sects.

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[14] W.E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), p. 3.

[15] Ibid., p. 3.

[16] The figures in the Census of Canada, 1931 (Vol. 1, pp. 794-5) are United Church 177,000; Anglican, 113,000; Lutheran, 82,000, and Presbyterian, 72,000.

[17] Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. 1, pp. 794-5.

Many smaller rural or outlying areas had no functioning establishment churches. The funadmentalist preachers were willing to travel to remote settlements and were often able to attract people who were not strictly members of the sect. Even where a church existed, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the members attended fundamentalist "rallies", if the services were as attractive to the "frontier" people as Mann suggests.

Though one cannot say with certainty why Alberta was so disposed to fundamentalism, it can probably be explained largely in terms of U.S. influence, the "frontier" theory, and the depression. By U.S. influence is meant two things: firstly, the relatively larger number of immigrants from the U.S. midwest, and more important, the easy drift of evangelists and evangelical ideas across the border. The dislocation caused by the recent and rapid settlement and the relative social isolation in rural areas, heightened considerably by the disorienting effects of the depression, apparently left rural Albertans particularly vulnerable to the funadmentalist appeal.

> The continuous social unsettlement that characterized Alberta's history from 1906...implied a crisis situation favorable to conservative, traditionalist, religious teachings which upheld the recognized symbols of authority, and promised security and stability.[18]

The third factor to be considered, in conjunction with the frontier society and the agricultural economy, is the depression. Clearly it is impossible to understand the Alberta of the 1930's unless one understands the impact of the depression, and even more clearly, it is impossible to understand either the Social Credit

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[18] Mann, Sect, Cult and Church, p. 58.

or the CCF movement except as a response to the depression.

The full force of the depression was felt on the prairie economy.[19] Saskatchewan and Alberta were the hardest hit of all the Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan most of all because of its reliance on wheat, and because crop failures compounded the already serious problems caused by the depression. The hallmarks of the depression on the prairies were low prices, low income, crop failure, high unemployment, and a crushing burden of debt. The people most severely affected, Young notes, were those engaged in the production of primary products and those out of work.[20]

Wheat prices dropped drastically in the depression. In 1929, the total value of wheat grown in Alberta was $103 million and the price was $1.14 per bushel. In the depth of the depression, the price per bushel fell as low as 32 cents, and even by 1935, the price was only 61 cents and the total value was about $60 million.[21]

The problem of farm debt which proved so severe in Alberta was more a product of the frontier society than the depression. However, it became a matter of urgent concern to the farmer only with the full impact of the depression, which made it impossible for many farmers even to meet the due interest, much less the principal. Mallory states that "it has been estimated that mortgage debts on farms in Alberta amounted in 1931 to $162,000,000. When debts under agreement for sale, implement debts, bank indebtedness, and

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[19] J.R. Mallory, Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), p. 59.

[20] W.D. Young, Democracy and Discontent (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 43.

[21] Mallory, Social Credit, p. 59.

other debts are added in, the total for that year was $317,800,000."[22] Moreover, England notes how widespread the debt was, with about 40 per cent of Alberta farms reporting mortgage indebtedness in 1931.[23]

Two other serious consequences of the depression on the prairies were the drastic reduction in income, and high unemployment. Again, Saskatchewan and Alberta were hardest hit in terms of income. From 1929 to 1933, Saskatchewan suffered a decline in per capita income from $478 to $135, a 72 per cent reduction, while Alberta went from $548 to $212, a 61 per cent decrease. The national average was a 48 per cent decrease.[24]

Unemployment was also severe. As of June 1, 1931, 21 per cent of Alberta's wage earners were out of work (compared with 20 per cent in Saskatchewan and 18 per cent in Canada).[25] These figures do not include farmers, manufacturers, professionals, and so on.

The problem of debt and unemployment did not affect individuals or families only. The depression also confronted governments in the western provinces with severe problems. One such problem was public debt.

> The rapid opening up of the West in the thirty years before 1935 had been based in the main on public and private borrowing. The community services had sprung into being very rapidly and they had been financed by provincial and municipal borrowing, usually launched in periods of abnormally high income and on the expectation that that income would continue.[26]

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[22] Ibid., p. 60.

[23] Robert England, The Colonization of Western Canada (London: P.S. King and Son, 1936), p. 48.

[24] S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 93.

[25] Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. 6, p. 3.

[26] Mallory, Social Credit, p. 60.

Added to this was the burden of relief which was piled on municipalities and provincial governments as a result of widespread unemployment. In this respect, Saskatchewan was in a far worse position that any other province, while Alberta merely matched the national average. Over the period 1930-1937, Saskatchewan spent 13.3 per cent of its total income in relief expenditures, whereas Alberta spent 3.6 per cent, the average in Canada.[27]

The overall effect of the depression is summed up by Morton.

> The great depression and drought of the 1930's are not, in their disastrous effects, easily to be imagined or pictured. When farm prices ceased to possess economic relevance; when organized society could no longer be maintained out of local resource; when once independent men were reduced in their distress to accepting relief from government; when the sun itself was blinded by the driving sand as the nomadic cavalry of drought, the bone-grey tumbling mustard and Russian thistle, charged endlessly across the wind-scoured fields, as endlessly as in the distant and dustless offices of St. James and Bay streets the interest charges mounted: under these afflictions men passed beyond persuasion or appeal.[28]

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The picture of Alberta, then, was one of a relatively unstable rural "frontier" province, populated by newly-arrived settlers and beset by problems of debt, depression and social, economic and political instability. In the light of the portrait of Alberta, what can we begin to assume about the prospects for a socialist movement?

Seymour Martin Lipset is one of the most useful references in this respect, since he deals in general with the theory of left

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[27] Lipset, Agrarian Socialism, p. 93.

[28] Morton, Progressive Party in Canada, p. 286.

support and has looked specifically at the Canadian provinces.

Lipset claims leftist voting is generally interpreted as an expression of discontent, and, of significance in understanding the Canadian prairies, he says the need for security of income is an important factor in promoting left voting.[29]

It is extreme insecurity of income, rather than poverty per se which is an important condition for high leftist voting. Stable poverty tends to breed conservatism,[30] in general because the factor of rising expectations is not present. On the other hand, a wildly fluctuating income is conducive to radicalism, since it creates uncertainty, fear and insecurity and generally does not permit stable social patterns to develop. Perhaps equally important, Lipset states that knowledge of a better way of life is essential to development of radicalism.[31] Clearly one whose income level changes dramatically is well aware of different standards of living, since he has not only seen different standards of living but has experienced them himself.

The factor of income insecurity is particularly important in relation to a study of Alberta and Saskatchewan, for, as Lipset notes, the "boom or bust" agricultural wheat economy of North America provides a prime example.[32] The wheat farmer's income is particularly vulnerable to fluctations on two counts: first, the reliance on

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[29] S.M. Lipset, Political Man (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 232.

[30] Ibid., p. 63.

[31] Ibid., p. 63.

[32] Ibid., p. 232.

one crop, and second, the dependence on world markets, stakes his income on the twin uncertain factors of a successful crop and good sales. The wheat farmer is thus particularly subject to radicalism because he is both a one-crop farmer and a commercial crop farmer. Farmers whose crops are diversified, or who depend on local rather than world markets, are more likely to support conservative parties.[33]

In general, deprivation is a key factor promoting left voting, particularly where there is a lack of stable relationships or where the deprived individual can readily compare his position with that of others who are much less deprived. This deprivation can be either social or economic.

Lower income groups are more likely to vote for left parties, but paradoxically, this tendency is more pronounced in more economically advanced regions.[34] There may be a number of explanations for this fact--greater education resulting in easier politicization, greater social dislocation, starker contrast between classes, or perception of greater possibility of attaining collective benefits in a more advanced region.

Lower social status groups such as minority ethnic and religious groups also are more likely to vote left, whereas conservative support comes from the well-to-do, those of high ethnic status and the privileged religions.[35] (The Catholic vote, whether or not Catholicism is the major religion, tends for historical reasons to be anti-leftist.)

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[33] Ibid., p. 233.

[34] Ibid., p. 61.

[35] Ibid., p. 221.

The presence of deprivation among such groups will not in itself create radical political action. A catalyst is needed to translate needs into action.

> Granted that a group of people is suffering from some deprivation under the existing socio-economic system, it does not automatically follow that they will support political parties aiming at social change. Three conditions facilitate such a response: effective channels of communication, low belief in the possibility of individual social mobility, and the absence of traditionalist ties to a conservative party.[36]

Perhaps the most important condition is the presence of good communication among people who have a common problem. This helps create awareness of a community of interest and of the possibilities of collective action.

> When informal contacts are supplemented by formal organization in trade unions, farm groups, or class political movements, with all their machinery of organizers, speakers, newspapers, and so forth, political awareness will be intensified still more.[37]

Lipset also notes the significance for leftist voting of a belief in opportunities for individual social and economic mobility.

> Instead of taking political action, some discontented individuals attempt to better their lot within the existing economic system by working their way up the ladder of success. If such a possibility seems to exist, there will be a corresponding reduction in collective efforts at social change, such as the support of unions and leftist parties.[38]

Lipset stresses it is not so much actual mobility as belief in mobility which affects leftist voting. This accounts in part, he believes, for the relative lack of left voting by workers in the United States,[39] where the belief in individual opportunity is part

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[36] Ibid., p. 248.

[37] Ibid., p. 248.

[38] Ibid., p. 253.

[39] Ibid., p. 253.

of the national mythology.

The absence of traditionalist ties is also important to leftist voting. Whereas the impoverished workers or peasants of backward areas are dominated by traditional values, and are satisfied by the sense of meaning and stable personal relationships which develop by "knowing their place" within the established community structure, "the position of a commercial farmer or urban worker in a rationalized wheat economy offers no such stable structure of relationship."

> The personal relationships and local institutions that rewarded loyalty and punished deviation from traditional beliefs have been swept away, and aspirations for economic betterment are encouraged. The railway corporation or the grain elevator operation are protected by none of the ancient legitimacy which hallows the power of a great landowning family. The commercial farmer is free to respond to frustration with militant support of parties favoring social change.[40]

To sum up, support for leftist parties is generally promoted by insecurity of income, low social and economic status, especially in economically advanced regions, communication or group activity among those with a common problem, low belief in individual mobility, and lack of traditionalist ties to conservative values and institutions.

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Before turning to a comparison with Saskatchewan, we should briefly look at how well Alberta fit this model in the 1930's. The factor of "insecurity of income" was certainly present. Historically, the Alberta farmer was subject to fairly dramatic fluctuations in

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[40] Ibid., p. 259.

income, due in large measure to considerable dependence on wheat, as well as fluctuations in the prices of other farm commodities. During the depression, Alberta suffered a drastic reduction in per capita income. The poverty which resulted was the poverty of a fluctuating income, not the stable poverty which "breeds conservatism." Unemployment, and hence income reduction, was also high among the urban workers. The economic base was predominantly commercial crop, although to some extent, products were for the local market or home consumption. Alberta was predominantly Protestant, with a substantial number and a wide variety of minority ethnic and religious groups. In general, then, it is difficult to accept the argument that social and economic conditions would have made Alberta averse to left voting.

Moreover, two of the three "facilitators" of left voting outlined by Lipset were also present in substantial measure, although the third is open to much more question and may indeed be interpreted as a factor inhibiting support for a left party. It is unquestionable that there existed a need for communication between people with a common problem, and that fulfilling that need must have created some strong bonds of considerable political significance. While somewhat isolated from their neighbors in terms of distance, farmers were involved in farm organizations of both a political and economic nature--the UFA, the Wheat Pool, co-operatives, and so on. They also had channels of communication through which an awareness of common grievances could be expressed--for example, magazines such as The UFA, and the Grain Growers Guide. Even the widespread distribution of farm-oriented weeklies and the increasing use of

radio, while not necessarily promoting leftist ideology or "farmer class consciousness," would have served to make farmers aware of the extent and severity of depression conditions.

Perhaps even more important was the lack of ties to conservative values and institutions which tend to promote social stability. Alberta probably more than any other region of Canada, demonstrated a lack of loyalty to the old parties, or even to the party system. The frontier character of Alberta, the influx of late-arriving immigrants with few ties to traditional Canadian political values, and the relative importance of the British socialist and American agrarian influence, along with the relative weakness of the Ontario British influence, surely all fit Lipset's picture of a less stable society which should have been susceptible to a leftist appeal.

What is less clear, however, is the impact of the Albertan's belief in individual mobility. It can be argued that the Alberta farmer maintained considerable belief in his ability to advance himself, and certainly Macpherson argues (see Chapter II) that the Alberta farmer had a belief in a sense of economic independence which did not correspond to the reality of his situation. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to wonder whether the American free-enterprise ethic and belief in upward mobility might have been fairly strong in Alberta because of the influx of American settlers and the significant influence of American agrarian thought in Alberta.

However, if one were to argue that the American presence in Alberta was a crucial factor in the failure of the CCF, it surely would be necessary to explain why a socialist party was so successful in Saskatchewan, and to consider whether the two provinces were

really so different in terms of American influence. Our conclusion is that they were not so different.

Lipset himself concedes that the two provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta, are rather similar "in economic and social structure." Speaking of Alberta, he states:

> It too has widespread community participation through local governments and co-operatives. Politically, also, Alberta tends to resemble Saskatchewan...Alberta farmers, like those of Saskatchewan and North Dakota, are quick to react politically when a threat to their society or economy arises.[41]

Yet Lipset bases his explanation of the success of the CCF in Saskatchewan largely on social and economic factors, which suggests that similar favorable conditions should have existed in Alberta, and that the differences are rather more political. However, before dealing with this point more thoroughly, let us review the sequence of political events which brought the CCF to power in Saskatchewan.

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As in Alberta, the two key elements in the development of the CCF were the farmer and labor organizations. During the late 1920's, a radical minority within the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section)--The UFC--was advocating direct political action in co-operation with labor. A moderate element was able to command a majority during more prosperous years and kept the farmers' organization from entering politics. However, under the severe impact of the depression, opposition to political involvement fell apart, and by 1931, the socialists in the UFC had gained control of the organization.

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[41] Lipset, Agrarian Socialism, p. 216.

The UFC convention that year decided to enter politics on a socialist basis, and the leaders of the UFC and ILP (Independent Labor Party) agreed to work together to create a large farmer-labor party with a socialist program.[42] As in Alberta, the two groups affiliated to the CCF in 1932. Unlike Alberta, however, (see Chapter V) farmer and labor in Saskatchewan were joined in their political movement. Though it did not officially adopt the name Co-operative Commonwealth Federation for provincial usage until 1935, the Saskatchewan group was unified from the start under the name Farmer-Labor Group.[43]

> The U.F.C. and the I.L.P. working together as the Farmer-Labor Group, began an intensive campaign to win the next election.... The U.F.C. was in charge of the work in rural areas, while the I.L.P. campaigned in the towns and cities. The joint provincial organization was controlled by a board of seven representatives from each organization and seven elected at the annual joint conventions of the two groups.[44]

The first general election contested by the CCF (or Farmer-Labor Group) in Saskatchewan was the 1934 provincial election. Though they did not win the election, as they had hoped, they did become the Official Opposition. The Tories, who had been in power since 1929, were crushed by the Liberals, and failed to win even one seat. The CCF won five seats, even though their vote total (25 per cent) was slightly less than that of the Tories; the CCF strength was concentrated in the rural areas.[45] From an historical viewpoint, the major impact of the election was the establishment of the Liberals

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[42] Ibid., pp. 84-87.

[43] Ibid., p. 103.

[44] Ibid., p. 105.

[45] Ibid., p. 107.

and the CCF as the two major Saskatchewan parties at the provincial level.

In the 1935 federal election, the CCF did even less well, electing only two of 21 MP's; and one of them had been endorsed by Social Credit. Indeed, Social Credit proved as appealing to the Saskatchewan voter in 1935 as the CCF. The Social Credit vote was 20 per cent, compared to 19 per cent for the CCF.[46]

As a result, the CCF moderated its provincial program in 1936; the program contained no mention of socialism and dropped completely the plank calling for nationalization of land.[47] This watering down of the platform may have been a crucial factor in the eventual success of the CCF.

The 1938 provincial election, which say the Liberals returned to office, consolidated the CCF hold on second place, with 10 seats. To the surprise even of the CCF, Social Credit elected only two MLA's, and the Conservatives were again wiped out. Two Unity candidates (supported by all three opposition parties) were also elected.

Despite dissension in the party over CCF support for the war, the Saskatchewan CCF did reasonably well in the 1940 federal election, electing five of 21 MP's and in fact outpolling the Liberals in rural areas.[48]

Growing support for the CCF was evident during the early 1940's, and though a provincial election was due in 1943, the Liberals

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[46] Ibid., p. 109.

[47] Ibid., p. 110.

[48] Ibid., pp. 116-7.

passed an amendment extending the life of the Legislature one year. This only increased opposition to the government.[49] Thus in the provincial election of June, 1944, the CCF swept the Liberals out of office with 53 per cent of the vote. This was followed by the election of 18 MP's in the 1945 federal election.

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How does one account for the success of the CCF in Saskatchewan in terms of social and economic conditions? Lipset attributes it in general to widespread community participation and political interest which developed over the years as a result of small units of government (local participation), a vulnerable one-crop economy, a "one-class" society, sparse settlement and continual economic and climatic hazards.[50]

More specifically, the two crucial factors surely must have been the great importance of wheat in the province's economy, and the widespread development of the co-operative movement.

Saskatchewan was predominantly a rural province, and the CCF movement there was predominantly rural. Urban labor was a negligible factor in the life of the province,[51] but to the extent that it figures in our analysis, it too was susceptible to an appeal from the left, as the low income and high unemployment figures suggest. Nevertheless, it is on the rural areas which we must concentrate in assessing the rise of the CCF in Saskatchewan.

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[49] Ibid., p. 120.

[50] Ibid., p. 218.

[51] Ibid., p. 31.

The key to any explanation surely must be the domination of wheat in the economy of Saskatchewan. The extreme insecurity of income which Lipset discusses was very much a factor in Saskatchewan, where farmers indeed lived the life of gamblers.[52] The wheat belt of Saskatchewan was vulnerable not only to economic fluctuations but to the vagaries of climate, and the impact of both was very severe with the depression and drought of the 1930's.

If the vulnerability of the wheat economy was a negative condition impelling farmers to look to a socialist solution, their involvement in the co-operative movement could be described as the positive condition.

By the time the CCF came to power in Saskatchewan (indeed, well before that time), Saskatchewan farmers were highly organized not only in strictly farm organizations, but also in co-operative creameries, and the like.

The importance of the wheat pool (and other co-ops) in the development of the Saskatchewan CCF can hardly be overstated. Even though the majority of farmers in the Pool during the 1920's "were not oriented to any long-term goal of major social change,"[53] the Pools were important in creating a class consciousness among farmers; by demonstrating both the possibility and the desirability of co-operation. Moreover, the meetings brought people together, provided an opportunity to "propagate socialist ideas,"[54] and provided a training ground and springboard into political action for left-wing

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[52] Ibid., p. 27.

[53] Ibid., p. 63.

[54] Ibid., p. 74.

community leaders, leaders who subsequently gained greater positions of influence when conditions were ripe during the depression. The farmers were highly organized into farmers' organizations and co-operative movements, and often did not have a great deal of social contact outside those groups.

These, then, were the social and economic realities out of which grew a socialist movement which culminated in the election of a CCF government in 1944. But what were the political circumstances which permitted the CCF to achieve success after the depression, when it had not come to power during the depression? And how do these political circumstances differ from those which affected the CCF in Alberta?

Quite apart from any social or economic conditions, there were some purely political circumstances which benefitted the Saskatchewan CCF, but which were absent in Alberta. One of the keys was the fact that the Saskatchewan Tories virtually collapsed in 1934 and the CCF thus became the Opposition and logical successor to the Liberals. Secondly, although the Liberals had been out of power from 1929 to 1934, they probably were still to some extent regarded as the "old gang," a charge which could not be made about Social Credit in Alberta.

In general, the CCF success was the result of a gradual growth and development with deep roots in the province, unlike Social Credit in Alberta which mushroomed to prominence suddenly and dramatically. It had established a base in 1934, expanded that base in 1938, and completed the process by sweeping the province in 1944.

It is also widely acknowledged that the CCF established credibility in the decade leading up to eventual success by the generally responsible and effective performance of the CCF MLA's, and their concentration on practical issues in the Legislature.[55]

Moreover, the effectiveness of the "socialist scare" tactic against the CCF diminished considerably from 1934 to 1944, partly as a result of the "responsible" image of the Party's MLA's, partly as a result of a general drift leftward in Canada during the war, and partly because the party modified its program (especially relating to land ownership).

It was undoubtedly of great significance that the party was highly organized by 1944, with strong membership throughout the province. One indication of the party's strength at that time was the rapid growth of the party newspaper, The Commonwealth, which in 1943 was able to begin publishing on a weekly basis, and in 1944 reached a circulation of 25,000, a figure which has never been surpassed.[56]

Finally, a factor whose impact is difficult to gauge but which may have played an important role in the strong showing of the party in 1944 was the leadership of T.C. Douglas. Mr. Douglas had resigned as a federal Member of Parliament to return to lead the party shortly before the 1944 election, and his leadership proved highly effective. As Shumiatcher has noted, Douglas' focus

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[55]These observations are made as a result of conversations with a number of former Saskatchewan MLA's, cabinet ministers and other prominent members of the Saskatchewan CCF who were still active in the 1930's and 1940's.

[56]This was learned through the author's association with The Commonwealth.

on practical issues was undoubtedly beneficial to the CCF.

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What this tells us about the situation in Alberta depends upon how one interprets the CCF victory in Saskatchewan. If political or "accidental" factors are seen as crucial in Saskatchewan, it helps support our similar theory that political factors were crucial for Alberta. On the other hand, if one is to argue that social and economic factors are overriding in the success of the CCF in Saskatchewan and the failure of the CCF in Alberta, we should expect to find that the social and economic conditions in the two provinces were substantially different, and the general base of left-wing support much less prevalent in Alberta.

This thesis attempts to demonstrate, firstly, that political factors were in fact crucial; and secondly, that social and economic conditions in Saskatchewan and Alberta were similar in many more important respects than they were different, so that even if one were to argue that social and economic factors were crucial to the success of the CCF in Saskatchewan, it would still follow that there was a base of support for the CCF in Alberta.

To some extent, of course, the contrary position can be argued, for in some respects, Alberta was different from Saskatchewan in 1935. It too was predominantly agricultural, and fairly heavily dependent on wheat, but less so in both respects than Saskatchewan. Alberta was somewhat more heavily urbanized, and agriculturally there was more diversity of crops and more mixed farming. Thus Alberta was not quite so vulnerable to fluctuations in the world

market as was Saskatchewan, and to that extent should have been less susceptible to socialism.

The effects of the depression point this out. The decline in per capita income was severe in Alberta, but not as severe as in Saskatchewan. Unemployment and farm debt were as bad in Alberta, but the relief debt was less severe. Alberta had a slightly higher ratio of farm ownership to tenancy than Saskatchewan, though it is doubtful the difference was enough to be of much significance. Another point which could be made is that, relatively speaking, debt was a more serious consequence of the depression in Alberta. The vulnerability of the one-crop economy might make a province more receptive to socialism; the concern with debt might make another more receptive to social credit.

Perhaps the most important difference between the two provinces, however, a difference which relates to the wheat economy, is the extent of development and historical importance of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan. Shumiatcher discusses the significance of this development.

> Cooperatives are Canada's school for socialists. With the growth of the co-operative movement, the basis of which is unassailable, comes an understanding of the benefits of social ownership and control, and of co-operative production and distribution. Hand in hand with co-operatives in Saskatchewan there has marched the C.C.F., which is the national co-operative unit, and which can be expected to develop no more rapidly than the theory of co-operation, and its practical application to the affairs of the people of Canada.[57]

Shumiatcher also indicates the degree to which co-operatives had penetrated the Saskatchewan economy, compared to Alberta.

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[57]Morris C. Shumiatcher, "Alberta Election," Canadian Forum, Vol. 24 (Sept., 1944), p. 128.

Even in 1944, when Alberta's population nearly equalled Saskatchewan's, Saskatchewan membership nearly doubled that of Alberta.

> Saskatchewan's co-operatives, which number 513, extend into many phases of essential industry. They include the great wheat pool and creameries, the powerful Co-op Oil, retail stores, the credit unions and even funeral homes. These co-operatives in Saskatchewan are supported by well over 210,000 members. In Alberta, the co-operative movement has developed only 110 units with a membership approximating 120,000. Though vigorous and expanding in extent and importance, the Alberta co-operatives have not reached their highly developed state in Saskatchewan.[58]

It is not entirely clear why the co-operative movement was so much more firmly implanted in Saskatchewan than Alberta, although a number of reasons have already been suggested. The greater dependence on wheat, the vulnerability of the one-crop economy, plus the fact that Saskatchewan was even more predominantly rural than Alberta, were all factors encouraging Saskatchewan residents to band together in co-operatives. In all cases, these factors were important to Alberta, but less compelling than in Saskatchewan.

The fact that Saskatchewan was settled somewhat earlier than Alberta was probably also a contributing factor, if only because it gave Saskatchewan an earlier start in forming co-ops, and because in the early years of the twentieth century, Saskatchewan had a somewhat larger population than Alberta.

Another factor which may help account for the mushrooming of Social Credit as opposed to the gradual growth of the CCF was that socialism did not have the same religious appeal as did Aberhart's Social Credit. Though many of its leaders were connected with the church and emphasized the view that socialism was based on Christian principles, the CCF was not evangelical in nature and did not mix

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[58] Ibid., p. 128.

religion and politics in the same manner Aberhart found so effective. If it was religious, it was the rational, worldly message of the social gospel, not the emotional message of evangelism.

Notwithstanding this difference, there is a degree of confusion, even contradiction, in the interpretations of the significance of fundamentalist religion in Alberta. Clearly it helped promote Social Credit, but was it just as clearly a detriment to the development of socialism in Alberta?

Mann notes that the fundamentalist religions were conservative, individualist, and hence by implication, anti-socialist. On the other hand, Lipset tells us that lower status groups such as minority religious groups tend to vote left.

Although our judgement must be tentative, it seems likely that supporters of fundamentalist religion would have responded negatively to the CCF appeal insofar as it was seen as collectivist, socialist or materialist, but positively insofar as it was seen as populist, anti-establishment, and in support of the rights of the oppressed. In any event, it is difficult to accept the assumption that the pervasiveness of fundamentalist religion in Alberta was a critical factor in preventing the CCF from gaining strength. While Alberta had a greater number and variety of fundamentalist religions than anywhere else in Canada, Saskatchewan was not so very different in this respect. The fundamentalist influence was also strong in that province, and was moreover fairly strong within the Saskatchewan CCF. Indeed, Saskatchewan's first CCF premier was a Baptist minister. The argument that Saskatchewan and Alberta were crucially different in terms of religious composition is simply not convincing.

The pattern of settlement and type of immigration must also be considered. The greater U.S. influence may be considered an anti-socialist influence, since the lack of a socialist tradition in the U.S.[59] would presumably have left a mark on Alberta. In Alberta, it would appear, American ideas were more dominant than British socialism.[60] UFA leader Henry Wise Wood was particularly influential in Alberta politics, and his economic outlook was considerably less radical than the ideas later put forth by the socialists.

Finally, the labor movement in the two provinces requires some investigation. The labor movement, it is true, was not large enough to create a significant base for a socialist movement in Alberta. On the other hand, it was more than twice the size of Saskatchewan's. Thus, a nearly pure agrarian socialist party could not be built in Alberta. It could be argued that although the labor movement was too small to be the foundation of a socialist movement, it was large enough to be a visible irritant to that segment of the farm population which is anti-labor--and thus was overall a negative influence in building a socialist movement in Alberta. However, this assumption is at best purely tentative and speculative, and one could as easily argue the contrary position. In any event, the particular size of labor was surely not a crucial element in either province.

Granting these differences, it is nonetheless undeniable that the two provinces were really very similar in many important

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[59] See Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), Chapter 1.

[60] W.D. Young, Anatomy of a Party (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 16.

respects, which would lead one to expect they would be fairly similar in terms of conduciveness to socialism. Indeed, in some respects Alberta could be judged the province in which a socialist movement would more likely flourish.

In terms of ethnic composition, for example, the two provinces were much the same. Similarly, as we have noted, they were fairly similar in terms of religious composition. Indeed, Alberta had a slightly lower proportion of Catholics, a factor which should have made it more receptive to socialism. In addition, the immigrant and alien population was higher, and in general, "lower status" ethnic groups were predominant. In this respect, the significance of the Ukrainian element in Alberta life should not be overlooked, for Lipset argues Ukrainians provided strong support for the Saskatchewan CCF by 1944.

Compared to Saskatchewan, Alberta in 1935 was more urbanized, more industrialized and more unionized. Agriculturally, farmers were well organized in farmers' organizations, notably the UFA, and certainly had access to the channels of communication (such as radio and farm papers) which were available to their counterparts in Saskatchewan.

Even more than Saskatchewan residents, Albertans lacked traditional ties and exhibited even less trust in the political and economic system. Alberta was peopled with even more recent arrivals from the U.S., Britain and Europe, who had little loyalty to the party system, little trust in the old-line parties, and little trust in the eastern financiers or businessmen, or railways, or elevator companies. In political terms, Sharp notes that "settlers who poured into the

West from Britain and the U.S. had no sentimental ties with the Canadian Liberal or Conservative parties."[61] These people also brought with them ideas of socialism, trade unionism and agrarian reform current in many parts of the world.

The conclusion this thesis draws from all this is that the two provinces, while different in some respects, were rather similar in terms of the social and economic conditions which should support a socialist movement, and that the differences between the two provinces were matters of degree rather than kind. The social and economic factors to which the development of socialism in Saskatchewan can be attributed were not absent from Alberta--they were only somewhat less compelling.

Although wheat was somewhat less important to Alberta's economy than to Saskatchewan's, it was nonetheless Alberta's biggest agricultural crop.

Although Saskatchewan suffered the most severe losses during the depression, Alberta ran a close second.

Although the co-operative movement was less highly developed in Alberta than Saskatchewan, it nevertheless played a significant role in Alberta's rural life.

This thesis argues, then, that despite some differences, the similarities between Saskatchewan and Alberta were more salient in terms of an assessment of the appeal of socialism. In our opinion, Alberta's social conditions were volatile enough, the agricultural economy was unstable enough, and the depression was severe enough,

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[61] Paul F. Sharp, Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), p. 50.

that socialism could have succeeded if the political circumstances had been different. Moreover, even if one were to accept the proposition that overall conditions in Alberta were not favorable enough for a socialist movement to win enough seats to gain power, the almost total lack of support for the CCF would still remain to be explained. Certain segments of society, at least, should have provided strong CCF support--even if insufficient to elect a CCF government.

Even if one accepted the theory that social and economic conditions accounted for the success of the CCF in Saskatchewan and its failure in Alberta, it might be supposed that Alberta wheat farmers would provide a base of support for the CCF, as they did in Saskatchewan. However, Alberta's "next-year country," a wheat region comparable to much of Saskatchewan, became and remained solid Social Credit country provincially. Similarly, we might expect that the co-operatives, though weak, would provide a base of CCF support. Yet many staunch supporters of the co-operative and wheat pool movements in Alberta were Social Credit, not CCF. Similarly, urban workers proved remarkably sympathetic to Social Credit, whereas in Saskatchewan, organized labor generally supported the CCF.

This thesis contends, therefore, that Alberta was no less volatile or radical than Saskatchewan, and not significantly (though perhaps slightly) less disposed toward socialism. Economic and social conditions were too similar to dismiss the possibility that socialism could have succeeded in Alberta, when it succeeded in Saskatchewan. What happened was that Social Credit appeared at a critical time and captured the fairly large vote that might

well have gone to the CCF, if political circumstances had been different.

To sum up the evidence of this chapter, Alberta was less disposed to socialism than Saskatchewan, but not so very much less. Moreover, it was at least as radical in many respects and that radicalism could have expressed itself in terms of support for the CCF, if the CCF appeal and the political circumstances had been different.

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Further evidence for this position can be found in the radical nature of Alberta's past and the radical nature of the Social Credit movement. This line of examination is pursued in Chapter IV.

An alternate explanation to the failure of the CCF in Alberta must be sought elsewhere. We have suggested that the answer lies to a great extent in the fact that political circumstances militated against the CCF in Alberta. Briefly, what happened was that Social Credit appeared at a critical time and captured a fairly large vote that might well have gone to the CCF, if political circumstances had been different. Similarly, political circumstances were a very important part of the CCF success and Social Credit failure in Saskatchewan. This line of argument is much more thoroughly considered in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER IV

ALBERTA'S RADICAL PAST

An assessment of the economic and social conditions in Alberta in 1935, in light of what is known about conditions which tend to promote left-wing voting, suggests that Alberta could have been fertile ground for a socialist movement under certain circumstances. A comparison with Saskatchewan, where the CCF was successful, lends further weight to this belief. That is not all, however.

Two other broad categories of evidence reinforce the thesis that potential support existed in Alberta for the CCF--Alberta's radical past and the radical nature of Social Credit. Let us consider the first one.

There are at least three aspects to Alberta's radical past--labour movements, farm organizations and political movements. The three are somewhat interrelated, but for the sake of simplicity they will be considered separately.

It might be argued that these movements were not demonstrably socialist, and in many cases that is so. However, this thesis argues that in most instances the protest movements contained significant socialist elements, or at least the seeds of socialism--that they prepared the ground for socialism. If they were not socialist, they were at least "pre-socialist." As Zakuta says, "in the West, socialism was a long additional step on a familiar

road."[1]

Though labor was far less significant than agriculture in Alberta's early days, it was nonetheless quite highly organized. When the Alberta Federation of Labour was formed in 1912, there were 153 union locals in Alberta, and there was a higher degree of unionization within the labor force than in eastern Canada--an estimated 90 per cent of all skilled labor was organized.[2]

The groups organized earliest were miners, railway employees, carpenters and typesetters and pressmen. Mining was particularly important in Alberta's early history, in terms of both size and radicalism of the labor movement. Early organization around the turn of the century was carried on in Alberta by the Western Federation of Miners. However, relations between the WFM and the coal miners were never smooth, and as a result the WFM voluntarily turned over all of its locals to the United Mine Workers of America (the last one being turned over by 1904).[3] Coal mining was to prove a source of turmoil in Alberta for years to come. In 1905, coal miners in Lethbridge were involved in a bloody strike over the issue of UMWA recognition. In this instance, the miners won and a UMWA local was formed.[4]

A great deal of mine organization was carried on by the

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[1]Leo Zakuta, A Protest Movement Becalmed (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 36.

[2]Lorne Thompson, The Rise of Labor Unionism in Alberta (unpublished paper prepared for Dr. Eugene Forsey, 1965, available in the Alberta Department of Labor Library, Edmonton), p. 1.

[3]Ibid., pp. 17, 25.

[4]Ibid., p. 25.

UMWA from 1905 to 1910, and from 1910 to 1925 a number of serious lengthy strikes occurred in the coal mines. The UMWA hit its peak in the 1920's, but it remained "a potent force in Canadian Labor right up until the Second World War."[5]

That the miners were a potential source of political radicalism is at least suggested by their involvement in "revolutionary unionism" in Alberta. Alberta miners were reportedly prominent in the radical American I.W.W., which flourished in Alberta for a few years in the early 1900's. However, the I.W.W. reached a peak in 1911 and rapidly declined, disappearing from the Canadian scene by 1915.[6]

Miners were also active in the One Big Union (OBU), and indeed a large group of coal miners (District 18) went over to the OBU a month after it was formed, although they were eventually won back by the UMWA.[7]

The OBU was formed in Calgary in 1919 after the radical western trade unionists broke with the more conservative eastern-based TLC in 1918. The OBU, patterned on the IWW, was avowedly socialist, and believed that all workers, skilled and unskilled, should be together in a single big union. For the OBU, the ultimate weapon was the general strike.[8] The OBU flourished only briefly, then gave way to the more conservative large international unions.

The evidence about the political views of Alberta laborers

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[5] Ibid., p. 34.

[6] Ibid., p. 45.

[7] Ibid., p. 51.

[8] W.D. Young, Democracy and Discontent (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), pp. 15-16.

in the early 1900's, including the miners, is rather sketchy. The fact that radical--even quasi-revolutionary--unions sprang up among the miners does not necessarily indicate any deep-rooted commitment to socialism (or indeed to any radical social change). Indeed, the fact that radical unions seemed to flourish only briefly and disappear almost as suddenly as they sprang up, may suggest that their success with the miners was the result of immediate pressing economic concerns experienced by the miners, rather than any attachment to the union leaders' messages of political radicalism.

Nevertheless, the experience of the radical mine unions, and indeed the whole OBU experience, while not proving that Alberta was necessarily fertile ground for socialism, at least demonstrates that a fairly large segment of Alberta had been exposed to radical socialist thought. And the fact that they were receptive to the radical unions, if only for a short time, surely indicates some potential for a radical political group.

In this light, the significance of the more orthodox trade union movement which followed, especially after the First World War, should not be underestimated.

Railwaymen, machinists, carpenters, pressmen and printers, as well as miners, were active in the international unions. And while the internationals were less radical than the OBU, they nonetheless gave rise to political action which was in the tradition of democratic socialism; labor political parties, organized in the larger Alberta cities by 1920 or earlier, had their base of support in the internationals.[9]

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[9]This was learned in an interview with Elmer Roper, former Alberta CCF leader and editor of The People's Weekly, conducted Jan. 12, 1973.

The labor parties which were formed (such as the Canadian Labor Party and the Dominion Labor Party in Alberta) did not unify the entire labor movement of the province in one centralized political body. Control tended to rest at the municipal level and decisions about whether to contest elections were usually made at the local level. Candidates were frequently run in areas of high labor concentration, and, especially after 1921, they were reasonably successful.[10] Provincially, labor won one seat in 1917, four in 1921, six in 1926, and four in 1930. Federally, labor in Alberta did less well, but it did have some success. William Irving was elected for labor from Calgary in 1921, lost in 1925 and subsequently ran and won as a UFA representative from a rural seat in 1926. One labor member was also elected from Alberta in 1926.[11]

Labor was even more successful at the municipal level, especially during the early 1930's, and for a time labor representatives controlled a number of city councils. In 1931, a Labor Party candidate was elected Mayor of Edmonton, and three of the four aldermen elected were labor candidates.[12] The labor mayor was re-elected in 1932 and 1933, losing in 1934. In Calgary, labor controlled the school board and half of city council in 1933,[13] and in Lethbridge, four labor men were elected to council in 1934.[14]

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[10] Roper interview, Jan. 12, 1973.

[11] These figures are available in annual issues of the Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

[12] Alberta Labor News, Nov. 14, 1931.

[13] Ibid., Nov. 25, 1933.

[14] Ibid., Dec. 8, 1934.

The prominence of labor in Alberta politics is underscored by the fact that in the 1934 Saskatchewan provincial election, the Farmer-Labor Group (CCF) sent an "urgent request for speakers from Alberta."[15] Two labor leaders from Alberta complied.

All of the Labor MLA's were swept aside by Social Credit in 1935, and throughout Alberta, with few exceptions, Social Credit virtually replaced labor at the municipal level. Obviously, many former labor supporters had switched their allegiance to Social Credit. Moreover, it cannot be argued (as some have said of the UFA defeat) that labor was rejected because of its socialist ties to the CCF, for clearly labor had been promoting socialist programs with some success well before 1935.[16]

While it cannot be shown that all the labor candidates were especially radical or even socialistic in outlook, it is clearly evident from the platforms of the Alberta labor parties, as published in various issues of the Alberta Labor News, that they were socialistic in many important respects. Moreover, a good number of individuals who were most prominent in the labor movement were full-fledged socialists in the vanguard of the CCF organization--notably Elmer Roper and William Irvine. Admittedly, this is not conclusive evidence in support of our thesis, but surely the relative success of these labor groups lends weight to the contention that Alberta had a potential for the growth of a socialist movement.

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[15] Ibid., June 2, 1934.

[16] The evidence may be found in numerous issues of the Alberta Labor News.

More important than labor to Alberta's history were the agricultural movements, both economic and political, which flourished in Alberta. According to Sharp, the prairie protest movement was nourished by three traditions--earlier agrarian movements in eastern Canada; British co-operatives, trade unions and socialism; and U.S. agrarian movements.[17] The influence of American radicalism was particularly strong in Alberta, although the "crossfertilization of ideas provided by this diversity of influences created a breadth of understanding which was sometimes lacking among agrarian reformers in the American West."[18]

The vulnerable and uncertain nature of the prairie economy had led Alberta farmers early in the province's history to band together in agrarian organizations designed to improve the political or economic status of the farmer. In Alberta, as in Saskatchewan, the first such ventures were economic in nature, and go right back to the time of the founding of the province.

In 1905, the Society of Equity, a branch of the American Society of Equity, was established in the Edmonton district. (The Society set up a number of co-operative business enterprises including a flour mill and a lumber mill, but they collapsed within a year.) In 1906, a rival organization, the Alberta Farmers' Association, was established. It was concerned largely with educational and political matters.[19]

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[17] Paul F. Sharp, Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), p. 58.

[18] Ibid., p. 60.

[19] W.K. Rolph, Henry Wise Wood of Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), pp. 31-32.

The two organizations were rivals for the support of the farmers until 1909, when they amalgamated to form the United Farmers of Alberta. From the outset the UFA was recognized as the political voice of Alberta farmers.[20] Largely as a result of political pressure by the UFA, the provincial Liberal government in 1913 passed the Alberta Co-operative Elevator Act and a farmer-owned company, the Alberta Co-operative Elevator Company, was formed that year. The new company was a financial success and soon expanded its operations to become a general co-operative enterprise.[21]

Interestingly, the co-operative farmers movement in Saskatchewan was in advance of Alberta even at that time. A similar company, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, had been formed in Saskatchewan in 1911, and by 1914 there were 192 farmers' elevators in Saskatchewan, compared to only 52 in Alberta.[22] Saskatchewan was also the birthplace in 1906 of a farmer-owned grain company--the Grain Growers Grain Company--established to compete with the organized grain trade. The organization flourished, but only after a bitter struggle with private companies.[23] In 1917, the Alberta Co-operative Elevator Compnay united with the GGGC to form the United Grain Growers Ltd.[24] In 1923, after the UFA victory in Alberta, the Alberta Wheat Pool was established under the urging of UFA President H.W. Wood.

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[20] Ibid., p. 32.

[21] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[22] Sharp, Agrarian Revolt, pp. 39-41.

[23] Rolph, Henry Wise Wood, pp. 32-34.

[24] Ibid., p. 34.

Though these grain growers organizations were primarily economic, they were politically significant in at least two respects. The struggles to organize and the opposition encountered taught the farmers the value of political activity and some of the political techniques necessary for success. Moreover, the co-operative nature of these economic ventures must surely have made the farmers more receptive to political doctrines which stressed co-operation.

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The earliest electorally-oriented agrarian protest political movement of any significance in Alberta was the Non-Partisan League, which moved from North Dakota into Saskatchewan and hence to Alberta, where a branch was organized in December, 1916. Growth of the League was extremely rapid in both provinces, and within a year of the first Alberta convention held in February, 1917, membership in the NPL in Alberta was nearly 3,000.[25]

The Non-Partisan League in Alberta, of which William Irvine was secretary, was radical in outlook and more than a little socialistic. True, its appeal rested in part on the traditional western grievances of high transportation costs, low farm prices and unfavorable marketing conditions; but it went beyond that to challenge many aspects of the capitalistic system. The League was clearly socialistic to the extent that it called for the nationalization of public utilities, of banking and credit, of all industries "in which competition has virtually ceased to exist", and of all coal mines,

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[25]Sharp, Agrarian Revolt, p. 78.

water power and forests.[26]

In electoral terms, the League was more successful in Alberta than Saskatchewan. Though the League had little time to prepare or organize for the 1917 provincial election in Alberta, it nonetheless revealed its strength by electing two of the four candidates nominated. More importantly, the League in Alberta, unlike Saskatchewan, remained united and active after the election, and continued to grow in strength, cutting into UFA support.

The Non-Partisan League eventually merged with UFA in 1919, but the unification was in large measure a victory for the League. The UFA was under growing pressure from its rank-and-file to engage in direct political action, although the leadership, particularly President H.W. Wood, was opposed to such action. The League, agitating for political action and also promising an alternate vehicle through which the farmers could enter politics, forced the UFA to act; and at its 1919 convention, the UFA authorized the locals to enter politics at the federal level. The Non-Partisan League soon vanished as an entity in Alberta, but its influence did not.[27]

The importance of the League to Alberta's agrarian past should not be overlooked. The League promoted and popularized a radical agrarian philosophy with strong socialist elements, it proved the catalyst which forced the UFA into politics, and it brought into the UFA and into the political life of the province some prominent left-wing supporters, most notably William Irvine.

Despite Wood's reluctance to engage in electoral activity,

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[26] Ibid., p. 79.

[27] Ibid., pp. 98-99.

the UFA came to power in 1921 on the basis of widespread rural support, and remained in power until 1935. Though the UFA movement was radical in concept, it was not strictly socialistic, for Wood's politics were not conducive to socialism in a number of respects.[28] First, the emphasis on "non-partysim" did not create a situation in which a democratic socialist party could easily take root within the Parliamentary system. More importantly, the concept of group government and occupational representation, while a class concept in one sense, did not tend to create the kind of "true class consciousness" of doctrinaire socialism--a sense of exploiters against exploited.

Indeed, the idea of group government" was a somewhat nebulous concept in which parliamentary representation would have been determined by occupational groups working in harmony, rather than through conglomerate parties attempting to reconcile diverse interests within them and competing against one another. To that extent it was not really compatible with the working of the parliamentary system.

Furthermore, Wood in 1921 rejected a suggested merger with labor, and further rejected a proposed joint platform. Moreover, Wood's insistence on decentralization implied in local control was not conducive to a strong unified party which an active socialist government would require to implement programs. Finally, UFA governments did not adopt socialist platforms and certainly did not attempt or apparently even consider any wide-scale nationalization.

This thesis does not argue that the UFA was socialist; rather,

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[28]The best explanation of Wood's politics can be found in his biography by W.K. Rolph, Henry Wise Wood of Alberta; another useful source is Paul Sharp's Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada.

that it was "pre-socialist." That is, it was of a nature which could have provided a springboard for a later socialist movement, and moreover, that support for the UFA was in large part the kind of support that could become socialist.

Moreover, there were some aspects of Wood's political philosophy which were socialistic in nature. While the insistence on local control had a negative influence on effective party cohesion, it was essentially democratic in nature. Wood's populist idea of political control in the hands of the people was one to which many socialists would subscribe. Moreover, though Wood did not view society in Marxist class terms, he clearly favored an economic order which was non-exploitative and co-operative, concepts which are basically socialistic. Wood's activity in establishing and promoting the Alberta Wheat Pool surely gave impetus to this co-operative spirit.

Though Wood opposed any formal affiliation with labor, he was not anti-labor and did not oppose co-operation between farmer and labor either during or after elections, as long as each group ran as a completely separate entity. In many instances, labor would endorse UFA candidates in predominantly rural constituencies, with the reverse in predominantly urban ridings. The UFA government itself co-operated with labor. For a time it included a labor man in the cabinet, and it is credited with passing substantial legislation favorable to labor.[29]

When assessing Alberta's conduciveness to socialism, it

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[29]Elmer Roper, though a labor critic of the UFA government, acknowledged their favorable legislative record. Interview, Jan. 12, 1973.

should be kept in mind that Wood was frequently less radical than many rank-and-file UFA members. He often urged the cautious approach when others demanded radical action.

This can apparently be attributed largely to Wood's basically conservative nature. Certainly his biographer leaves the impression that Wood was less radical than many of his followers, but that he usually managed to carry the day and keep his supporters behind him by the force of his personality and his obvious ability.

> Despite the seemingly radical nature of his political appeal with its emphasis on economic group solidarity, Wood was essentially a conservative in political and economic matters.[30]

Wood opposed the UFA entrance into politics before 1921, finally succumbing to rank-and-file pressure. Similarly, the decision a decade later to join the CCF was opposed by Wood. And at the 1923 UFA convention, some delegates proposed a radical program of economic reform which was successfully opposed by Wood.[31] Many farmers held fairly extreme views on financial matters, and the UFA 1923 resolutions which were opposed by Wood were in part of a type later supported by Social Credit. They included a call for a provincial bank, long-term loans financed through provincial bond issues, and provincial-wide drought relief.[32]

Overall, the UFA experience in Alberta provincial politics clearly suggests the farmers were favorably disposed toward economic co-operation and government control of finance and credit, ideas to which socialists could readily subscribe.

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[30] Rolph, Henry Wise Wood, p. 171.

[31] Ibid., p. 172.

[32] Ibid., pp. 172-3.

The Progressive experience also points out the more radical temper of Alberta, for in general the Alberta Progressives--the UFA members--were more uncompromising and more leftist than were the other Progressives. For one thing, the Alberta Progressives were opposed to a mere realignment of parties, and hence were most vocal in opposing any move to join the Liberals. They were intent on destroying the party system, on breaking the control which the parties exerted. Alberta Progressives, more class conscious than their colleagues, were "radicals out to transform the conditions of politics and the working of the constitution."

> They increasingly saw the cleavage in society, not as one of sectional alignment, but as one between classes. The cleavage might be closed by a new economic order, in which co-operation would replace competition and inaugurate a commonwealth in which the state would render economic justice to all classes in all sections.[33]

The Albertans were prominent members of the breakaway Ginger Group. While some may argue that the Ginger Group did not reflect popular sentiment, it is difficult to accept the proposition that they were terribly far in advance of the voters, since the Alberta Progressives did not suffer serious losses in subsequent elections, as did the more traditional Progressive group.

The Alberta Progressives by the mid-1920's increasingly recognized common aims with labor, and began to form links with Woodsworth; and later they were instrumental in bringing together labor and farmer in the CCF.

In one other important respect, the Alberta Progressives revealed their radical spirit. They were early agitators in the

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[33]W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 201.

Commons for credit reform, and advocated the doctrine that credit controls should rest with the state.[34] Irvine was particularly active in this endeavor.

The Alberta Progressive MP's were more radical than were the provincial UFA members of the legislature, and in many respects were closer to the ideas of the Non-Partisan League than to the provincial UFA. William Irvine was perhaps the pivotal figure, for he was active with three key elements, the Non-Partisan League, Labor and the federal UFA. Clearly he was very comfortable with socialist ideas.

The experience of the Alberta Progressives led quite naturally to the development of further radicalism; it reinforced a belief in non-partisanship, promoted co-operation, prepared the ground for monetary theories, and gave expression to the socialist ideas of the grain growers.[35]

The Progressives tilled the ground for socialism, but at the same time left fertile soil for Social Credit. That Social Credit flourished while the CCF failed does not indicate a basic anti-socialist sentiment in Alberta; rather, it suggests that Social Credit was able to capitalize on the Progressive heritage, while the CCF, through a series of political circumstances, could not.

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This raises another broad argument in support of the thesis that Alberta was not inherently anti-socialist in 1935. Our contention

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[34] Sharp, Agrarian Revolt, p. 190.

[35] Ibid., p. 189.

is that Social Credit was in fact a revitalized radical movement in 1935, and that in many respects the CCF and Social Credit were similar. They were similar in that they appealed to the same type of people in much the same way. They were both opposed to the "old gang" and both were populist to a significant extent. Their concerns, their platforms and their promises were rather similar, and they were strikingly similar in terms of the rhetoric they employed. Even more important, they were perceived as similar by many voters; and for a time even the CCF considered Social Credit a radical movement. Indeed, for a time the Saskatchewan CCF made a fairly serious effort to establish common cause with Social Credit.

The significance of this is that the people of Alberta who voted Social Credit were not, it appears, rejecting the CCF because it was radical or socialist; they were supporting the radical group that, largely because of the circumstances of politics, happened to be the most acceptable alternative at that time.

Young deals with the similar nature of the CCF and Social Credit appeals.

> Farmers and workers responded to the doctrines of the movements that federated in 1932 as the CCF because they made sense of a chaotic situation. In Alberta three years later, farmers responded to a different doctrine for essentially the same reasons. Social Credit proposed to repair and modify the free enterprise system to make it work as it should; the CCF group proposed to substitute a better system. Both agreed that the members of the social and economic establishment were the villains of the piece and both offered the farmer what he wanted: the opportunity for an honest man to make an honest dollar.[36]

Both the CCF and Social Credit based their appeal in part on a rejection of the old-line parties in favor of a new movement.

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[36] W.D. Young, Anatomy of a Party (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 36.

To both, the enemies were the exploiting moneyed interests of the east; it was the "little people" against the financial giants. Both were against financial control and foreclosures, and both called for action to relieve debt and control credit. The Social Credit demands for a debt moratorium and provincial control of credit are paralleled by a plank in the 1937 CCF platform calling for debt-free farms[37] and the Labor Party plank in the 1935 provincial election calling for "administration of our provincial credit in the interests of a co-operative social order."[38] The similarity extends even to the rhetoric and slogans.[39] The "fifty big-shots" and the "big shot bankers" were enemies common to both the CCF and Social Credit.

It will be argued, and correctly so, that despite the similarities, the two movements were significantly different in some respects. Aberhart's promises of "monetary reform, a just price and a basis dividend"[40] may have been radical, but they were designed to "make capitalism work," whereas the CCF emphasis on nationalization was anti-capitalist. Clearly there was a very real and significant difference between the radicalism of the CCF and the radicalism of Social Credit. Nevertheless, it is our contention that the similarities of their appeal, rather than their doctrinal differences, were most visible to the average farmer.

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[37] People's Weekly, Feb. 20, 1937.

[38] Alberta Labor News, April 27, 1935.

[39] Young, Anatomy of a Party, p. 88.

[40] J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 249.

Indeed, there is some evidence to support Lipset's contention that "many of the farmers...did not see vital differences in the programs and tactics of these CCF and Social Credit movements."[41]

The sentiment for unified CCF-Social Credit action is one indication. Between the 1935 and 1940 elections, Premier Aberhart received a number of letters from Social Credit supporters suggesting an alliance. Aberhart rejected such suggestions on the grounds that "there is a vast difference between Social Credit and CCF philosophies."[42] Perhaps that was true, but it was not readily evident to a good many of his supporters.

The unity movement was even stronger in Saskatchewan. Social Credit began to win support in Saskatchewan, and actually outpolled the CCF in the 1935 federal election. Both within and without the CCF, a strong movement developed for unity between the two.[43] Though the move was opposed by both Coldwell and Woodsworth, the CCF convention of 1936 overwhelmingly approved a unity resolution. The CCF made overtures to Social Credit in 1937, but "the Social Credit organization, which was under the influence of Premier William Aberhart of Alberta, refused to consider a coalition because of the bitter attacks on the Alberta government which the Alberta C.C.F. was continually making."[44]

Ironically, the Social Credit rejection proved fortunate

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[41] S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 123.

[42] Premier's Letters, File No. 1104, Provincial Archives of Alberta.

[43] Lipset, Agrarian Socialism, p. 108.

[44] Ibid., p. 112.

for the CCF and unfortunate for Social Credit, for in the 1938 provincial election, to the surprise of the CCF, they fared much better than Social Credit.

> The Social Crediters apparently lost their appeal to the Saskatchewan agrarians as a result of the failures of the Alberta government to fulfill its original promises of $25 a month and the cancellation of all interest. Social Credit had had three years of power in Alberta and had done little in the way of reform.[45]

There is also some electoral evidence (admittedly sketchy), that Social Credit voters were not particularly opposed to the CCF. For example, in the 1942 Edmonton by-election in which Elmer Roper won a seat for the CCF, the Social Credit candidate was eliminated before the final ballot. According to Roper, he was able to win because the bulk of the Social Credit second-choice votes went CCF, even though Aberhart had made an explicit anti-socialist pitch in the campaign.[46]

The voters were not the only ones who perceived Social Credit as radical and similar to the CCF. At the start, the CCF activists also considered Social Credit radical, and were surprisingly calm about the Social Credit victory in the 1935 election. Indeed, the post-election editorial in the Alberta Labor News (the voice of the Alberta CCF) states that "the Labor News has never felt alarmed over the prospect of Mr. Aberhart's success at the polls."

> It would be hypocritical to say that Thursday's result causes us no disappointment. Labor's loss is a matter of serious

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[45] Ibid., p. 114.

[46] Interview with Elmer Roper, Jan. 12, 1973. Unfortunately, examination of preferential ballots in other instances is of little help in substantiating this thesis, since the Social Credit candidate almost invariably was on the final ballot, and hence the distribution of second-choice votes cannot be determined.

regret and discouragement. So is the defeat of staunch C.C.F. supporters like Chester Ronning, Donald MacLeod and some other U.F.A. members.

But an examination of the results reveals very clearly the fact that it was not a knowingly reactionary vote. Indeed, it was a radical vote. It was a vote that was seeking to find expression in the proposals that appeared to offer the most striking challenge to the present social order. The Labor vote went Social Credit. Much of the U.F.A. vote went Social Credit. It went that way because the people were seeking to find a more immediately effective means of voicing a protest against things as they are.

Despite the fact that Labor and U.F.A. candidates who were committed to the policies of the C.C.F. were not elected, it was not an anti-C.C.F. vote. Because the C.C.F. was not organized for provincial purposes, and thus as an organization did not contest the election, a great many supporters of the movement felt no obligation to support candidates who as individuals were committed to the C.C.F. The electors were trying to hit as hard as they could at things as they are and they felt that on the provincial field the Aberhart movement offered the best opportunity to do it.[47]

The CCF activists had considered the Social Credit program radical and worthy of support. It was not until it began to appear likely that the Aberhart administration was unwilling or unable to fulfill its promises that the CCF began actively to oppose it, as an editorial in 1936 by William Irvine indicates.

At the present moment everything points toward the failure of the Alberta Government to make good on any of its major promises. This is not a matter for rejoicing even for those who were or are political opponents of the administration. Every person among the ranks of common folk really wanted to see the government succeed. What farmer would have been opposed to the wiping out of debt, the abundance of purchasing power, a just price for his cattle, reduced taxation, and an added $25.00 per month over and above his income? Or who among the industrial workers would not have welcomed steady employment, the abolition of the necessity for relief, higher wages and no starvation in the midst of abundance? Or what merchant would think of opposing these things when in addition he would increase his turn-over by about ten times and increase his profits accordingly? No, the failure of the government to do all these desirable things is not a matter for rejoicing, it will cause deep and universal

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[47] Alberta Labor News, August 24, 1935.

disappointment.[48]

CCF opposition to Social Credit really began to develop with the 1936 budget, a budget so orthodox and un-Social Credit that it was applauded by the Edmonton Journal as "sane." At the end of the 1936 session, under the headline "Disastrous Session Concluded," the People's Weekly (successor to the Alberta Labor News), condemned the Aberhart administration for introducing "higher taxes, reduced social services and a lowered standard of living."[49] Disappointment turned to rage, and all-out opposition, with the government's introduction in 1937 of the Alberta Press Bill. The People's Weekly called it "fascism,"[50] and Irvine issued a statement on behalf of the CCF labelling the Aberhart government "detrimental to the lives of the people in every way."[51]

Finally, opposition to Aberhart began to develop within the Social Credit movement, (both within the caucus and among party supporters at large) over his failure to deliver the promised social credit legislation. Aberhart was in danger not because he was too radical but because he was not radical enough.

Clearly, then, Social Credit in 1935 was perceived to be radical in its promise and in its appeal. Moreover, it was considered by many to be very similar to the CCF, even though Aberhart never attempted to promote such a view (indeed, he attempted to discourage it), and was in fact personally opposed to socialism.

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[48] People's Weekly, Oct. 3, 1936.

[49] Ibid., April 11, 1936.

[50] Ibid., Oct. 2, 1937.

[51] Ibid., Oct. 9, 1937.

Even the CCF regarded the Social Credit victory as a victory for radicalism, and to some extent, a victory for left-wing ideas.

The Social Credit triumph, this thesis contends, indicates not that Albertans were impervious to a socialist appeal in 1935, but rather the contrary.

To sum up, it cannot be demonstrated that Alberta was not conducive to socialism. The evidence strongly suggests the contrary, that Alberta and Saskatchewan were similar in terms of many of the conditions which promote socialism. At the very least, even if the conditions which tend to promote socialism were less pronounced in Alberta than in Saskatchewan, the basic pattern was similar. Moreover, Alberta's radical past--in terms of urban labor, agrarian economic movements and political movements--lends credence to the view that Alberta was not inherently anti-socialist. While these movements were not necessarily socialistic, they were the stepping stones from which a successful socialist movement could have sprung in the depression. Finally, the success of Social Credit, far from proving that the CCF brand of socialism was anathema to Albertans, actually indicates the strength of radicalism in Alberta which could well have supported the CCF.

* * *

However, there remains one serious problem with which this thesis has not fully come to grips. To this point, we have presented evidence to substantiate the argument that given Alberta's past and its social and economic makeup in 1935, the population should have been susceptible to a socialist appeal, particularly one stressing

practical issues.

What we have not shown, however, is that there in fact existed any widespread active sentiment among the rural population in favor of socialism generally or the CCF in particular. Nor have we demonstrated an absence of anti-socialist sentiment strong enough to have denied power to the CCF, regardless of its program and regardless of the existence of factors which we have argued tend to promote socialism. It is to these questions we now turn briefly.

While the evidence is not conclusive, one student of the UFA from 1921 to 1935 concludes that there was in fact little popular grass roots sentiment for the CCF or for socialism in the early 1930's, and that Alberta farmers were "more interested in monetary reform than a socialist system."[52]

> Virtually none of the submissions to the provincial government from individual farmers or U.F.A. locals during this period /1932 to 1935/ had anything to say about socialism or the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. The farmers were far more interested, it seems, in measures which would bring immediate relief than in the complicated business of restructuring the economic system. Correspondence with the government on the subject of the C.C.F. was carried on almost exclusively by the U.F.A. executive.[53]

But even if we accept that there existed little pro-socialist sentiment, does it therefore follow automatically that the contrary was true--that the sentiment was strongly anti-socialist? We do not think so.

Undoubtedly there existed among a certain upper class segment of Alberta--big businessmen, professionals and the like--an awareness

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[52]Carl Betke, The United Farmers of Alberta, 1921-1935 (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Alberta, 1971), p. 149.

[53]Ibid., p. 131.

of and opposition to the CCF and to any form of socialism. But they represented a distinct minority of the population. The key to our assessment must be the farmers and working men.

In assessing whether they were basically anti-socialist, a crucial matter to consider is the decision of the UFA and Labor to affiliate to the CCF (see Chapter V for details).

Betke's analysis would suggest that the UFA decision to affiliate was made from above, and it is undoubtedly true that is where the impetus came from. However, if there had been strong grass roots sentiment against the CCF, it surely would have surfaced at the UFA convention.

In fact, however, according to the Edmonton Journal, only two of the 223 delegates to the 1933 UFA convention spoke against affiliation, and the vote in favor of affiliation was almost unanimous. Commented the Journal: "As the vote showed, there was practically no opposition to the proposal to affiliate. In nearly every case, the speakers advocated adoption of the resolution."[54]

The fact that the delegates to the UFA convention endorsed the affiliation, and re-affirmed it at subsequent conventions, suggests an absence of strong overt anti-socialism in the rural communities, for it is highly improbable the UFA delegates would have readily endorsed a proposal which they knew to be widely unpopular with their neighbors.

The point becomes clearer when we contrast the 1933 affiliation decision with the 1935 UFA convention rejection of social credit, in which the leadership generally opposed social credit, and

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[54] Edmonton Journal, Jan. 19, 1933.

rank and file delegates (reflecting the sentiments of their neighbors back home) generally supported it. While the executive formally won that vote, it was a hollow victory which irreparably split the UFA. (See Chapter V). The decision to affiliate to the CCF, on the other hand, did not reveal any such overt opposition or create any such split in the organization.

A similar line of reasoning may be followed in respect to Labor's affiliation with the CCF. While the impetus may have come from the labor leadership, the delegates' endorsement of the resolution suggests an absence of strong anti-socialist sentiment among the province's working men.

This thesis further contends that if a significantly large anti-socialist feeling had existed among Alberta's farmers and laborers, it should have manifested itself against the other movements which contained strong socialist elements--notably the Progressives, the Non-Partisan League, and the Labor parties; and even to a lesser extent, against the UFA and Social Credit movements in their early years. However, there seems to have been little recognition of the "socialist" elements in these movements, and certainly no rejection of them by farmers and workers on those grounds. Is it unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that Alberta farmers might have recognized in the CCF more of its populist program than its socialism?

This brings us back to a point which Betke raises, and one which we agree with, that Alberta farmers in the depression were more interested in immediate answers to immediate problems than in socialist plans to restructure the economy. But this was the case in Saskatchewan as well as in Alberta, and it did not present an insurmountable barrier to the CCF in Saskatchewan. Indeed, to some

extent, it worked to the advantage of the CCF in Saskatchewan, and could have in Alberta as well.

As we have already noted, the severe problems faced by farmers in Alberta in the early 1930's included low prices, agricultural instability, uncertainty of income, and debt. At the same time, there existed in Alberta a strong sense of grievance against a variety of "exploiters"--including businessmen, bankers, railways and elevator companies--which was both a regional and a class grievance. In addition, Alberta was populated by a good number of recent arrivals from countries familiar with radical politics, and also by a substantial number of "minority" ethnic and religious groups who tended to be outside the mainstream of traditional politics.

It is surely not unreasonable to argue that even if the CCF could not appeal to many of them on the basis of a socialist analysis, it could appeal to them on the basis of its program.

The CCF program was not entirely foreign to many Albertans, as they had been exposed to many of its elements in previous radical movements. Moreover, the CCF could offer relief to the problems created by the depression through a series of measures including price stability through marketing boards, support for co-operative ventures, nationalization of finance and credit, debt relief and various welfare state measures. Furthermore, the CCF could have provided a vehicle for minority group involvement in politics, as the CCF did in Saskatchewan and Social Credit did in Alberta.

In conclusion, it is our contention that while there existed no strong pro-socialist sentiment as such among the Alberta rural population in the early 1930's, the province's radical past and

its social and economic conditions suggest Albertans would have been susceptible to a socialist party which appealed on the basis of a populist program. As in Saskatchewan, it was a program, not socialist dogma, which could have formed the basis of a CCF victory, if political circumstances had been right.

The theory that the CCF failed because of inherent anti-socialism is, at the very least, cast into grave doubt. As a result, the theory that it was political circumstances which militated against the CCF seems increasingly the more plausible explanation. It is to that explanation which we now turn.

CHAPTER V

THE TIES THAT BOUND

To this point, this thesis has attempted to refute a common argument that a socialist movement could not have succeeded in Alberta because of unfavorable social and economic conditions, and to demonstrate that in many respects, Alberta should have been open to a socialist appeal in the 1930's.

It is not enough, however, merely to establish this point. It is necessary also to suggest an alternative explanation for the failure of the CCF.

This thesis contends that a good part of the answer for the CCF failure can be found in the peculiar set of political circumstances which existed in Alberta and which effectively trapped the CCF.

More specifically, the core assumption of this thesis is that the crucial factor in the CCF failure was its association with the UFA, and the fact that the United Farmers were in power in Alberta when the CCF was formed during the depression. The CCF was unable to take root in Alberta because it was dragged down with the UFA when the UFA government was crushed in 1935.

This chapter deals with the ties which bound the CCF to the UFA, and attempts to demonstrate why that interrelationship was of such significance to the failure of the CCF to make any headway in Alberta.

It is clear that the people of Alberta wanted a new government in 1935. If the CCF had been an alternative to the government, it is argued, the voters might very well have turned to it. Instead, because the CCF was linked to the governing party, they had to look elsewhere for an alternative to the existing government.

> In Alberta the political option of forming a class-conscious agrarian party out of organized farmers' movements, as the U.F.C. did in Saskatchewan, was almost impossible, since the Alberta equivalent of the U.F.C., the United Farmers of Alberta (U.F.A.), was in power when the depression began. Though the U.F.A. adopted a socialist program in 1933 and affiliated to the C.C.F. nationally, the option of a U.F.A.-C.C.F. government did not represent a new and radical alternative to the people of Alberta. The radical new choice was presented by William Aberhart....[1]

At this point, a very important question arises, a question which created some bitter debate following the UFA defeat in 1935. Was it the UFA or the CCF which suffered most from their association? In other words, was the CCF prevented from developing because of its association with a faltering UFA government, or was the reverse in fact the case--namely, that the UFA's defeat was in large measure the result of its association with the socialist CCF? The People's Weekly, unofficial organ of the CCF, left no doubt about its answer.

> We wonder if there is anyone who seriously believes that the U.F.A. government...would have survived the Social Credit landslide if the C.C.F. had never been conceived? On the other hand, there are a great many people who believe that the Social Credit movement would never have had its chief excuse for existence if the U.F.A. government had adopted C.C.F. policies and had proceeded to solve the problems of the province of Alberta in something like the way the Socialist government of New Zealand is proceeding. There are many who believe that the U.F.A. government was wiped out not because it was too much C.C.F., but because it was not C.C.F. enough. If the C.C.F. did anything at all to the U.F.A. it made it more radical. And the U.F.A. was not defeated because it was too

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[1] S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 122.

radical, but because it was not radical enough.

> In their desire to be as kindly as possible to former colleagues, many members of the U.F.A. and the C.C.F. have refrained from suggesting that the U.F.A. government of Alberta was responsible not only for its own defeat but also for the defeat of the U.F.A. members of the federal Parliament.[2]

Irving takes the other side, arguing that "unfortunately for the political future of the U.F.A., the socialistic programme of the C.C.F. frightened the farmers of Alberta."[3]

A somewhat more balanced view of the situation is presented by Neatby.

> The UFA could not benefit from the enthusiasm and optimism of the new CCF party and yet it was close enough to the CCF to suffer from the accusation of being socialist.[4]

In assessing this question, a consideration of the events leading to the establishment of the CCF, and the specific nature of the association which existed between the UFA and CCF, will be helpful.

* * *

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation came into being at the Calgary conference August 1, 1932, a conference which brought together representatives of a number of farm and labor organizations. Among those represented were the UFA and the Canadian Labor Party and the Dominion Labor Party of Alberta, the UFC(SS)--United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section)--and the Independent and Co-operative

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[2] People's Weekly, Jan. 15, 1938.

[3] J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 232.

[4] H.B. Neatby, The Politics of Chaos (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), p. 148.

Labor parties of Saskatchewan, the Independent Labor Party of Manitoba, and the Socialist party of Canada from B.C. Co-operation between the member organizations and correlation of their political activities was agreed to under the name suggested by J.S. Woodworth, one of the principal proponents of a co-operative commonwealth federation.[5]

At the Calgary conference, Woodsworth was chosen President of the Federation, and Norman Priestly (vice-president of the UFA) was chosen secretary. The conference adopted an eight-point manifesto, a "practical" socialist document which called for a planned economy, socialization of banking, credit and finance, public ownership of utilities and public development of natural resources, security of tenure for the farmer, socialization of health services and expansion of other existing social legislation "during the transition to a socialist state," equal opportunity, encouragement of co-operatives, and federal responsibility for unemployment.[6]

Despite the emphasis on planning and the expanded role of government implied in the program, Woodsworth and the affiliating groups emphasized that the CCF was not a unified structure or a political party.

> The new movement is not a political party, it is a federation of groups which in their own sphere retain their autonomy and identity, but, in support of a common national program, will make common cause from coast to coast.[7]

This rather loosely-knit and decentralized structure, and the insistence upon autonomy of affiliated groups, was to cause

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[5] W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 282.

[6] Alberta Labor News, March 11, 1933.

[7] The UFA, Dec. 1, 1932, quoted in Morton, Progressive Party p. 282.

considerable confusion and serious problems for the CCF in Alberta.

Although the Calgary conference marked the formal beginning of the CCF, it was in fact the culmination of a series of steps which had been taken in that direction for several previous years. The spirit of co-operation which had been fostered in the House of Commons between the Labor MP's led by J.S. Woodsworth and the radical "Ginger group" (mostly UFA members who had split with the more traditional Progressives) laid the groundwork for a formal association. It not only solidified personal bonds between leading left-wing farm and labor representatives in Parliament who subsequently led the movement toward the formation of the CCF, but it also clearly demonstrated that co-operation between labor and farmer was possible and could be mutually beneficial.

One of the necessary conditions for the formation of the CCF was a greater degree of unity between existing labor and socialist movements. A move in that direction was made in Regina in 1929 with the first formal convention of the western labor parties, which brought together representatives of labor political parties from the four western provinces. This was followed by the second western conference of labor political parties held in Medicine Hat in 1930 and the third in Winnipeg in 1931. The effects of the depression were intensifying and each succeeding conference was increasingly radical.[8]

> The significance of the conferences of the western labour parties has generally been overlooked by students of CCF origins. The conferences helped knit together the urban left, and eventually

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[8] W.D. Young, Anatomy of a Party (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 24-26.

provided a point of contact for the farmers' organizations.[9]

Indeed they did, for the 1932 conference to be held in Regina was changed to Calgary in response to a UFA invitation to hold a joint meeting. The result was the Calgary conference at which the CCF was formed.

How the UFA came to issue the invitation is itself an interesting story of developing radicalism in the farmers' movement as the depression wore on, and increasing recognition of the need for farmer-labor co-operation. In this respect, the most significant year of politicization was 1931. At the UFA's 1931 convention, H.W. Wood retired as head of the organization, and was replaced by Robert Gardiner. Gardiner, a member of the Ginger group in Parliament, did not share Wood's antipathy to the creation of a political party involving elements other than farmers. That same year, at its convention, the Saskatchewan farmers organization--UFC(SS)--committed itself to political action in co-operation with other groups.[10] These two events, Wood's retirement and the Saskatchewan decision, paved the way for swift UFA action which culminated in the Calgary conference. The UFA convention of January, 1932, "ceased its preaching of group organization and resolved on co-operation with other organized groups,"[11] pledging support for the creation of a Co-operative Commonwealth.

So directed, the UFA executive met in July, 1932, with the UFWA (women's organization) executive and UFA MP's and MLA's and

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[9] Ibid., p. 24.

[10] Morton, Progressive Party, pp. 279-280.

[11] Ibid., p. 280.

drafted a ten-point manifesto which "lay the foundation of a co-operative state." Similar to subsequent CCF manifestos, the UFA document called for, among other things, nationalization of credit, public ownership of utilities and co-operative farm marketing.[12] The Calgary conference followed this meeting by less than a month.

The founding convention of the CCF was held the following summer (July, 1933) at Regina, and Alberta was well represented. Seventeen of the 131 delegates and several of the nine MP's present, were from Alberta. It was at this convention that the CCF manifesto, drafted by the intellectual wing of the Federation, the League for Social Reconstruction, was adopted. The 14-point manifesto was based on the eight-point Calgary document, although the points were elaborated on and the document was expanded to include such matters as external relations and trade. The document was radical though not as doctrinaire socialist as some of the labor delegates would have liked. Significantly, like the Calgary document, the Regina manifesto did not advocate nationalization of land; indeed, the farmer was specifically guaranteed security of tenure. Moreover, the convention rejected violence as a means of achieving CCF goals, and supported the principle of compensation for nationalized industry. In general, the farmers were more conservative than labor representatives, with Ontario farmers the most conservative. Nevertheless, in the opinion of one of the leading CCF intellectuals, the whole convention was "more radical than had been anticipated."[13]

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[12] Alberta Labor News, July 9, 1932.

[13] F.R. Scott, "The CCF convention," Canadian Forum, Vol. 13 (Sept., 1933), pp. 447-9.

As for Alberta, the Regina convention was merely another step in the formation of the CCF; in the year between the Calgary and and Regina meetings, the structure of the CCF in Alberta had effectively been established. At its convention in January, 1933, the Alberta section of the Canadian Labor Party voted unanimously to affiliate with the CCF. Later that month, the UFA annual convention similarly ratified the executive decision and formally affiliated with the CCF.

In February, an Alberta provincial council of the CCF was established, consisting of the executives of the two founding groups, the Alberta section of the Canadian Labor Party (CLP) and the UFA. The provincial council was to be the governing body of the CCF.[14]

On the surface, this appears straightforward. However, there was a serious problem inherent in this arrangement, a problem which stemmed in large part from the insistence, especially on the part of the UFA, on the autonomy of affiliated members, and from a reluctance by certain factions (again largely within the UFA) to see the CCF effectively exercise power. It was a problem which was not fully resolved until 1939, long after the UFA had been defeated and Social Credit successfully implanted in the province. (See Chapter VI). To appreciate the difficulties caused by the lack of effective centralized control, it is useful to consider the organizational arrangement and some of the organizational problems which developed over the years.

Despite the formation of the CCF council, one could not become a member of the CCF directly. One could only become a member

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[14] Alberta Labor News, Feb. 25, 1933.

of an affiliate group. It is true that people who were not members of the UFA or the CLP who wished to associate with the CCF could form a club which could affiliate with the CCF, but such clubs could not use the name Co-operative Commonwealth Federation or the initials CCF. The first such group consisted of 100 students from the University of Alberta in Edmonton who in March, 1933, formed an "Economic Reconstruction Association" (ERA) which affiliated to the CCF. Similar ERA clubs were subsequently formed in other parts of the province.[15] It was also decided by the provincial council that central councils of the CCF could be formed in cities and constituencies to co-ordinate CCF activities.

The main source of confusion, however, was the lack of a central decision-making body. One result of this was uncertainty regarding the status of candidates. For example, one of the most confused situations arose in September, 1933, when the Labor party was nominating a CCF federal candidate in Edmonton East. The vote was taken but the counting of ballots was postponed because the UFA local indicated a desire to participate in the vote. The Labor Party subsequently decided to count the ballots anyway, and Elmer Roper was declared nominated. It was labor's original intention that the nominee would be the CCF candidate, but in light of the UFA objection, the Labor Party settled on a compromise "solution" whereby Roper would be considered labor's choice when a CCF candidate was being selected.[16] The UFA eventually ratified the Labor Party's decision, but the incident nonetheless illustrates the

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[15] Ibid., Feb. 25, 1933.

[16] Ibid., Sept. 30, 1933.

confusion which existed.

The situation was clarified for the 1935 provincial election, though hardly to the satisfaction of those who favored direct involvement by the CCF. In January, 1935, the CCF provincial council (which still consisted of the executives of the Labor Party and the UFA) decided that the two groups, farm and labor, would again contest the election as separate entities, as they had done in the past. In other words, the CCF as such would not be organized for provincial purposes, even though the party was so organized in both Saskatchewan and B.C.[17]

Thus, both the UFA and CLP had adopted CCF programs, and both had affiliated to the CCF, yet they were running, though not against each other, certainly not as a unified group. How did such an anomolous situation develop? The answer, it seems, lies primarily with the UFA government, not with labor.

A report in the Alberta Labor News on the Labor Party election platform "which embraces the principles of the CCF," makes the following comment about the UFA:

> It was pointed out by Labor Party President Elmer Roper that a great many members of the present U.F.A. organization and a few of the present U.F.A. members of the Legislature are very close to the Labor viewpoint.[18] (Emphasis added).

Roper, who regarded the UFA government as rather conservative, may well have been implying that a substantial number of UFA MLA's were not close to the Labor viewpoint, which reflected the CCF viewpoint, and thus presumably were less favorable to CCF policies.

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[17] Ibid., Jan. 19, 1935.

[18] Ibid., April 27, 1935.

As if to underline this point, the labor convention called on UFA constituencies to nominate as candidates only those who pledged support for CCF principles, and agreed to co-operate with UFA candidates "who support CCF principles."[19]

Clearly it was the UFA government and not the UFA organization which was being blamed for the lack of CCF organization and participation in the election, as an editorial in the Alberta Labor News makes clear.

> Alberta would have had a government backing the CCF policy if the sentiment in the UFA organization had been translated into provincial politics.[20]

Roper summed up the situation which existed in 1935 in a sharply worded almost bitter article in The Canadian Forum, nearly three years after the election but before the UFA-CCF association had been fully resolved.

> But no C.C.F. movement has ever really been consummated in Alberta. From the beginning the cabinet ministers and most of the private members of the U.F.A.-controlled legislature were opposed to the Socialist nature of the new Federation and lost no time in giving emphatic private and public utterance to their views. But the annual conventions continued to vote almost unanimously to remain affiliated with the C.C.F.; the paradox of a U.F.A. government opposed to an organization with which the majority of its own rank and file desired to be associated was smoothed over by the expedient of considering the C.C.F. affiliation to be for federal purposes only.
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> That was not the only disability from which the C.C.F. in Alberta suffered from the beginning. Although a Provincial Council for the C.C.F. was set up, consisting of the executives of the then two affiliated groups, the Labor Party and the U.F.A., the constitution of the farmers' body was never changed to permit the adoption of a procedure whereby the C.C.F. could become operative. Thus in the 1935 federal election some of the U.F.A. candidates, former members of parliament, refused to accept the C.C.F. label and made a point of saying so publicly.

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[19] Ibid., April 27, 1935.

[20] Ibid., May 18, 1935.

> To sum up: the U.F.A. has been affiliated with the C.C.F. from the beginning for federal purposes only; but no procedure was devised to make the federation operative in the province, even for federal purposes.[21]

The original decision to affiliate with the CCF was not supported with equal enthusiasm by all factions of the UFA leadership. Though the situation obviously varied with individuals, it seems safe to say that in general federal UFA members of parliament were in the vanguard of the affiliation movement, while the provincial cabinet and members of the legislature were, if not opposed, at least considerably less warm to the idea.

This is an interesting point which merits some attention, for if true, it reinforces the contention that the CCF was hindered by its association with the UFA.

Evidence of the MP's enthusiasm is obvious. The election of MP Robert Gardiner to the UFA presidency signalled the move toward affiliation with the CCF, and a pro-socialist speech by Gardiner preceded the UFA vote to affiliate in 1933. Other UFA MP's, most notably E.J. Garland and William Irvine, were even more firmly committed to socialism. Whereas Gardiner emphasized the UFA was a separate organization, and that the CCF was a federation rather than a party, Garland and Irvine were "at home among the socialists,"[22] and would presumably have been quite happy with a unified socialist movement. Indeed, Irvine was by 1938 one of the staunchest advocates of a unified party. The evidence that the provincial members were generally lukewarm to the affiliation is

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[21] Elmer E. Roper, "Alberta Farmers in Convention," Canadian Forum, Vol. 17, (March, 1938), pp. 408-9.

[22] Canadian Annual Review, 1934, p. 50.

less direct and based somewhat on hearsay, although several sources agree on the question.

John Irving states (admittedly without presenting evidence) that "most of their (UFA) Cabinet ministers were not favorably disposed to socialism."[23] This is corroborated by the Roper statement, already presented, that "from the beginning the cabinet ministers and most of the private members of the UFA-controlled legislature were opposed to the Socialist nature of the new Federation...."[24] And we know that at least one government member, former Alberta agriculture minister F.S. Grisdale, publicly blamed the defeat of the UFA government on some "professional politicians" who maneuvered the UFA into the CCF.[25] Presumably he was one provincial member opposed to affiliation from the start.

It may be assumed that Premier Brownlee was less enthusiastic about the affiliation than was Gardiner. Brownlee's reluctance to adopt radical solutions (about which much more will be said shortly) suggests he was not disposed to socialism; and his refusal to follow his predecessor's practice of appointing a Labour MLA to his cabinet suggests one of two things: either he was firmly committed to Wood's concept of group government, or else he was specifically opposed to co-operation with labor. In either case, affiliation with the CCF would have been contrary to his beliefs. Furthermore, the Edmonton Journal reported that Brownlee refused to comment publicly on the affiliation decision when questioned after the 1933

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[23] Irving, Social Credit Movement, p. 304.

[24] Roper, Alberta Farmers in Convention," p. 408.

[25] People's Weekly, Jan. 15, 1938.

convention,[26] which certainly does not indicate wild enthusiasm for the proposal.

There is also evidence that at least some private members of the UFA provincial caucus were strongly opposed to the affiliation. Indeed, in 1934 two MLA's felt so strongly about the matter (although other reasons were also given) that they crossed the floor and joined the Liberals.[27]

One can only speculate why the federal members were more inclined than the provincial to affiliate with the CCF. The personalities involved played a part, but historical factors were undoubtedly more significant. The importance of the close ties which developed between Labor and UFA members of Parliament in the 1920's has already been discussed. The Progressive experiment had shown that non-partyism didn't work in the Parliamentary system,[28] and the MP's had learned the value of co-operation. Perhaps even more important, the federal members were in opposition, always on the attack, pressing the "reactionary, capitalist and eastern-controlled" government to adopt radical measures.

The provincial UFA members, on the other hand, were in power. Unlike the federal members, they had a government to defend, not a government to attack. In their view, an alliance with socialists could harm them; it could do little to help them politically, since they were already in power. Thus, it seems likely it would only have

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[26] Edmonton Journal, Jan. 19, 1933.

[27] Canadian Annual Review, 1934, p. 304.

[28] W.D. Young, Democracy and Discontent (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 37.

been those members who clearly had socialist leanings who would have been attracted to a UFA-CCF alliance. Those merely lukewarm to socialism would probably have been wary of this politically uncertain alliance.

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We have seen how the UFA and CCF were associated, and that the defeat of the UFA brought with it the defeat of the CCF. This thesis has argued that this was a significant factor in explaining the lack of CCF success in Alberta. To be able to assess this contention, it is important to trace the failure of the UFA and to discuss some of the factors which are alleged to have been the causes of the UFA defeat in 1935.

In general terms, the most significant factors to which the UFA defeat have been attributed are the depression, the alleged caution and conservatism of the government in response to the depression, a series of scandals, the UFA association with the CCF, and poor timing in calling the election.

The simple fact of the depression, exclusive of any government action or lack of action, was in itself a threat to the government's existence. The disruption caused by the depression created a public mood of dissatisfaction which tended to place any government in a vulnerable position.

> In the state of near desperation which had been engendered by the depression it was natural to turn to governments and political parties for a solution to an overwhelming political problem. The year 1935 saw landslide elections all over Canada and in almost every case the government in power was swept away by the blind anger of simple people who wanted something

done and at once.[29]

However, it was not merely that the UFA was the "old gang," in power when the depression began. The UFA government had failed to cope adequately with the depression. As we have seen, such problems as high unemployment, drastic decline in per capita income, the low price of wheat and mounting debt, went largely unabated during the last years of the UFA government.

While it may be argued these problems were largely beyond the control of the provincial government, the feeling nevertheless was widespread that the government was overly timid about taking action to meet the needs created by the depression. And indeed, the record shows that on several occasions the government refused to consider radical action which had been proposed.

The Brownlee government in its last years was recently described by Elmper Roper as "stodgily conservative."[30] Like many of Brownlee's critics, Roper was particularly upset by Brownlee's failure to deal with the problem of debt. Roper says that in the early 1930's he urged Brownlee to adopt some radical measures on debt, but in response Brownlee "just smiled" and spoke of the need of maintaining confidence in the government. In Roper's opinion, Brownlee's reluctance on this matter allowed Aberhart to cut the ground out from under him.[31]

William Irvine is another UFA activist who was allegedly

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[29] J.R. Mallory, Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), p. 61.

[30] Interview with Elmer Roper, Jan. 12, 1973.

[31] Ibid.

"at outs" with the Brownlee government after about 1930 because of its lack of action. Although he didn't formally break with the government, Irvine felt he was "batting his head against a stone wall."[32] Indeed, the two former CCF executive members who ventured this information themselves described the UFA government as "pretty orthodox."[33]

Brownlee himself lent some weight to these charges of excessive caution with statements such as the one that in order to plan ahead, a government has to assume there will be no radical changes in the capitalist system.[34]

The assessment of the UFA government as "conservative" must be a relative judgement. The UFA government had been and remained to the left of both the Liberals and Conservatives. It had enacted a good deal of progressive legislation, especially in the 1920's, and even Elmer Roper, a labor critic of the Brownlee government, admitted that nearly all of the labor legislation in effect in Alberta in 1935 had been enacted by the UFA.[35]

Nevertheless, the evidence is fairly clear that in terms of its response to the depression, as well as certain other matters in its last years, the UFA government can justly be accused of excessive caution. For example, for three succesive years--1932, 1933 and 1934--Brownlee opposed a debt moratorium, and in the 1934

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[32] Tape recorded interview with two former members of the CCF executive, Ernie Cook and Henry Young. Microtape #70:285, Alberta Provincial Archives.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Alberta Labor News, Feb. 24, 1934.

[35] Roper Interview, Jan. 12, 1973.

session had to beat back a strong attempt to legislate such a moratorium.[36] His response in 1933 had been to deny provincial responsibility and urge federal action on debt.

There are other examples of the Brownlee government's conservatism. In 1932, the government opposed a labor motion calling for the nationalization of land.[37] (Admittedly, this is one proposal which would almost certainly have been opposed by the farmers themselves, even those favorable to the CCF). And in late 1933, the government incurred the wrath of Labor MLA's by supporting the relief commissioner who had been accused of arrogant and high-handed treatment of relief recipients.[38]

The change of premiers in mid-1934 did not herald any significant change in attitude, for Reid seemed no more imaginative and no more capable of dealing with the depression than was Brownlee. Reid's conservatism was underlined by his approach to a question of civil liberties. In 1934, professors at the University of Alberta were barred by the university authorities from running for political office. The UFA convention of 1935 passed a resolution seeking legislation to prevent this type of discrimination, and in the 1935 session a Labor MLA introduced such legislation. Yet it was opposed by the Reid government and was defeated by a 33-15 vote.[39]

It is true that during the 1935 election campaign, Reid unveiled the UFA manifesto which proposed numerous radical measures

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[36] Issues of the Canadian Annual Review, 1932, 1933, 1934.

[37] Canadian Annual Review, 1932, p. 295.

[38] Alberta Labor News, Dec. 2, 1933.

[39] Ibid., April 27, 1935.

including refunding of debt, limiting interest rates, reducing the age of old age pensions, and work and wages for the unemployed. The catch, however, was that it was not the province which was to implement these measures since "the province had no authority in itself to try the proposed social schemes." Instead, the manifesto called upon the Dominion government to enact the proposed measures.[40] If this can be called radicalism, it was the kind of safe and ineffective radicalism which Brownlee had been fond of espousing--"leave it to the Dominion." It was hardly the response that desperate Albertans would have found satisfying in the midst of the depression, especially with Social Credit promising immediate provincial action.

This raises a further point, for in one other significant respect, the UFA government failed to respond to the demands generated by the depression--the demand for a scheme of social credit. Irving makes clear it was from the rank and file membership of the UFA that the demand for social credit was felt.[41] Yet in its opposition to social credit doctrine the UFA government and the leadership of the UFA organization stood together.

The government had heard both Douglas and Aberhart in 1934, and had not been impressed. However, it was at the UFA convention of January, 1935, that the turning point occurred. A resolution was brought before the convention stating simply that a system of social credit as outlined by Aberhart should become a plank in the UFA provincial platform. Aberhart was invited to speak to the

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[40] Canadian Annual Review, 1935, p. 349.

[41] Irving, Social Credit Movement in Alberta, see especially Chapter 4.

convention, which he did for 90 minutes. Debate on the resolution lasted all day, and it was clear there was widespread support for the resolution among the delegates.

The resolution was finally rejected by a large majority, but only after lengthy and impassioned speeches against it by several prominent UFA leaders. Apparently a large number of delegates did not vote, and it is said that many left the convention in disillusionment after the vote was taken. The UFA movement had been split by its rejection of social credit.[42] It had missed its last opportunity to block Aberhart by absorbing the social credit movement.

It is true the Reid government engaged Douglas as an adviser in May, 1935, in an attempt to stave off the Social Credit threat, but it must have been readily apparent that this was a fraudulent death-bed repentence, rather than a genuine desire to adopt social credit. Besides, the movement had long since passed from Douglas to Aberhart; and the political initiative by this time rested not with the UFA but with Aberhart. The Social Credit movement had gone too far to be stopped.

Whatever the wisdom of the move, the government's rejection of social credit was clearly seen by many of its advocates as another instance of the government's failure, indeed refusal, to adopt radical measures to fight the depression.

It was this--the government's failure to cope with the depression and its lack of daring in dealing with the depression--which was one of the major causes, and perhaps the single most

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[42] Ibid., p. 118.

important cause, of the UFA defeat in 1935.

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The depression was not the only factor, however. The government's position was further weakened by a series of scandals involving government members in the last years of its term in office.

Two of the three scandals which rocked the government in its last two years in office involved the Minister of Public Works, O.L. Macpherson. The first was a government matter, the second a personal one. During the 1933 session, the Liberals made charges regarding the administration of highway relief work, accusing Macpherson of overpayment of highway relief. The Public Accounts Committee investigated and ruled Macpherson had acted in good faith.[43] But since the committee was a partisan group dominated by government members, its report was rejected by the Liberals and its ruling did not necessarily clear Macpherson in the eyes of a suspicious public.

Macpherson was also involved in an unsavoury divorce situation (his ex-wife declared their divorce was not valid and challenged the legality of his second marriage), a story which became public knowledge in July, 1933, just after the highway relief scandal. Though the matter was eventually straightened out, the combination of the two scandals undoubtedly hurt Macpherson and the UFA government.

To add a final touch to the story, Macpherson, in the spring session of 1935, became involved during committee debate in a heated argument with the publisher of the Edmonton Bulletin and struck him

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[43] Canadian Annual Review, 1933, pp. 260-268.

with his fist.[44]

Undoubtedly the most serious scandal, however, was the one involving Premier Brownlee himself. In September, 1933, it became public knowledge that Brownlee was to be sued for the seduction of an 18-year old girl, a stenographer employed by the government. No criminal charges were involved; it was a civil action claiming damages on behalf of the girl and her father. The action was heard in the latter part of June, 1934, and on July 1 the jury found in favor of the plaintiff, and awarded $10,000 to the girl and $5,000 to her father. Three days later, the judge in the case overruled the jury and dismissed the action with costs assessed to the plaintiff. However, the judge's decision did nothing to clear Brownlee, since he did not rule that the seduction had not occurred. He merely ruled that no illness, and no loss of ability to render service, had resulted.[45] (The judgement was subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court of Alberta, the Supreme Court of Canada and the Privy Council, but since all three judgements were handed down after the 1935 election, they are not politically significant.)

Brownlee could hardly have come away from the trial in a worse position politically. Not only was he clearly judged guilty of the seduction in the eyes of the public; he was also in further disfavor by the judge's ruling. It must have seemed to a cynical public that the system served to protect the interests of influential citizens. The Premier was "guilty" but did not have to pay; despite the judgement of "ordinary" citizens (the jury) on behalf of another

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[44] Canadian Annual Review, 1935-36, p. 349.

[45] Canadian Annual Review, 1934, p. 298.

ordinary citizen, the Premier had been saved by the intervention of another influential member of society, the judge. The judge's decision undoubtedly placed both Brownlee and his government in an even worse light.

In any event, Brownlee resigned immediately after the jury's verdict, and R.G. Reid, Provincial Treasurer and Minister of Municipal Affairs, was selected by the caucus to replace him. Reid's new cabinet was sworn in July 10.

This is all public knowledge. What is less well known is that Brownlee had told the caucus of the pending charges before they were made public the previous September. He offered his resignation, which was at first accepted; but later that same day, the caucus reconsidered and reversed its decision, and thus Brownlee remained as premier during the trial.[46]

There is some disagreement about the importance of the caucus decision. Some former UFA members believe that if Brownlee had resigned at the start, in September, 1933, the UFA might have been saved.[47] If the scandals are the crucial factor in the defeat of the UFA, then Brownlee's resignation in 1933 might very well have saved the government. However, if they are only one of a number of reasons, and on the whole less significant than the depression, as this thesis contends, then Brownlee's decision to stay on cannot likely be held responsible for the defeat.

Just how important were the scandals in the defeat of the UFA? Irving has dealt with this question, but his position is

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[46] Cook-Young interview, Microtape 70:285.

[47] Ibid.

somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he says that the scandals were especially important in rural and small-town Alberta and that "the scandals caused the puritanical lower middle and working classes to turn away in disgust from the UFA-CCF alliance in Alberta."[48] However, he also warns against placing too much emphasis on the scandals.

> The importance of the scandals in providing fuel for the Social Credit movement can be over-estimated. Undoubtedly the scandals weakened the UFA cause but the strength of the Social Credit movement in rural areas was derived essentially from a positive rather than a negative appeal.[49]

For what it's worth, neither Macpherson nor Brownlee was brought into Reid's cabinet, so neither was a member of the government (though they were still private MLA's) for more than a year before the 1935 election. Admittedly one year was not enough time for the memory to vanish, but at least the "offenders" had been removed from their positions of responsibility.

Nevertheless, whether the scandals were a crucial factor in the fall of the UFA remains an open question. Irving's assessment is probably close to the truth. Social Credit certainly did have a strength of its own, and far too much emphasis has been placed on the scandals by some people. Still, their impact in a rather puritanical society should not be underestimated, for clearly they put the UFA government even more on the defensive. The depression was probably the main factor, but the scandals undoubtedly reinforced the anti-government sentiment created by the depression.

Another factor which is alleged to have contributed to the

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[48] Irving, Social Credit Movement in Alberta, pp. 244-5.

[49] Ibid., p. 72.

UFA defeat was its decision to affiliate with the CCF. As we have already seen, Irving is one who holds the view that "the socialistic programme of the C.C.F. frightened the farmers of Alberta...they were not yet ready for socialism...."[50]

As usual, Irving presents little evidence for this contention, although in two or three interviews, presented in his book, the question of socialism is mentioned as a concern. For example, one of the "secondary leaders" of the Social Credit movement, a former president of a UFA local and one who urged the UFA to adopt social credit theory, was opposed to the UFA affiliation with the CCF and specifically mentioned "fear of socialism" and the government control it implied, as a reason for defecting from the UFA.[51]

Moreover, it was noted earlier in the chapter that two MLA's deserted the UFA, partly because of the affiliation; and the former agriculture minister publicly stated his belief that the UFA defeat was the result of the affiliation.

On the other hand, Elmer Roper hotly denied the charge, contending that the reverse was in fact the case--the government was defeated because it failed to adopt socialist policies.

Paradoxically, there is probably some truth in both the Irving position and the seemingly contradictory Roper position. Affiliation with the CCF would have upset those who were clearly anti-socialist and might even have caused unease among those who were uncertain or unconvinced. On the other hand, there would have been few offsetting positive benefits either until CCF propaganda

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[50] Ibid., p. 232.

[51] Ibid., p. 202.

work and organization had been done, or until some beneficial socialist legislation was forthcoming. But little organizational work was done before 1935 for the CCF because of the unusual UFA-CCF organizational structure; and few legislative benefits were forthcoming because, while the UFA organization advocated socialism, the UFA government refused to implement the proposed socialist policies advocated on the grounds that they were federal matters. In other words, the UFA government probably suffered from the negative effects of its affiliation with the CCF, without capitalizing on the potential positive ones.

One final matter needs to be discussed in connection with the UFA defeat. That is the question of an error in judgement by Reid regarding the political threat to his government and his consequent timing in calling the election. Reid was advised by certain of his supporters to hold an early election in 1934 or at latest January, 1935, and that was apparently his intention for a time.[52] However, Reid apparently regarded the Liberals as the main threat,[53] and decided to postpone the election in the hope that the scandals would blow over, thus depriving the Liberals of their main ammunition. Had he held the election early enough, it might well have prevented Social Credit from organizing sufficiently to sweep the province. In seeking to avoid a Liberal challenge, he allowed the far more serious Social Credit challenge to develop. Whether he would have avoided defeat from one side or the other with a snap election in the fall of 1934 is of course a difficult question about which

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[52] Cook-Young Interview, Microtape 70:285.

[53] Canadian Annual Review, 1935-36, p. 335.

one can only speculate.

In summation, it seems safe to say that the depression and the government's cautious response to it, the scandals, the UFA-CCF association, and the timing of the election, all played some part in the crushing defeat suffered by the UFA.

Out of all this, we can see that the CCF was faced with a serious dilemma which prevented it from establishing itself in Alberta. The dilemma was this: the CCF could not build an effective political organization without the support of the major farmers' movement; on the other hand, the farmers' movement proved to be a hindrance to the development of the CCF. The CCF couldn't exist without the UFA, but it couldn't really develop within it.

Because the UFA government had grown rather timid and defensive it would not adopt the radical measures proposed by the CCF, despite the affiliation. Yet because of the nature of the affiliation, and the fact that the UFA was already in power, the CCF could not organize on its own nor run its own candidates on a radical program. Indeed, no CCF party existed apart from the affiliates.

On the other hand, those who favored a united CCF party and even those who favored a strong CCF federation active in politics, could not work in rural Alberta exclusive of the UFA before 1935, since they would have been in effect organizing against the government in power and indeed against their own most likely supporters. Such a move would have been politically untenable, as it would have split both the UFA and CCF movements.

Viewing the overall picture, it seems fair to say that the root of the CCF problem was not merely its affiliation with the UFA;

it was also the fact that the UFA was in power in Alberta when the CCF was organized. Alberta had gone radical too soon.

CHAPTER VI

THE POST - 1935 PERIOD

The central argument of this thesis is that the long-term failure of the CCF in Alberta resulted primarily from its complete inability to establish any electoral base in 1935, largely because of its association with a discredited UFA government, which prevented the CCF from running independently of the UFA; and also because of the presence of an untainted new radical alternative, Social Credit, which offered the electorate both a new government and solutions to existing social and economic problems which were highly appealing during the depression.

The damage done to the CCF through its association with the UFA and the 1935 defeat, coupled with the implantation of Social Credit in Alberta, may largely explain the subsequent failure of the CCF to prosper, though in this chapter we shall consider what other factors contributed to the consistent failure of the CCF in the following years.

In general, our analysis of the importance of Social Credit in the CCF failure rests on the assumption that a government, once in office, is relatively difficult to replace. Specifically, this thesis argues that Social Credit's success in Alberta effectively prevented the growth of an opposition strong enough to topple the government, and following from that, that the relative weakness of the CCF after 1935 stemmed not from deep anti-socialist sentiment

but directly from the strength of Social Credit.

The ability of Social Credit to maintain a position of dominance depended in part on luck--the chief factor being the onset and continuation of general prosperity in the 1940's, and the absence of any serious economic crises such as the depression. The government was also aided by an ideological flexibility which permitted the party to change rather dramatically to reflect the change from depression to prosperity. Finally, Social Credit developed over time an effective political machine reinforced by clever political leadership.

This explanation with its emphasis on the importance of continuing prosperity has double explanatory value for our purposes. It explains, firstly, why social credit was successful, and secondly, why a socialist movement had difficulty in Alberta.

Macpherson has argued that the Alberta farmer, because of his economic position, is to some extent politically schizophrenic, embodying both radical and conservative ideas which may conflict and even contradict one another. Thus, the degree of radicalism in his outlook tends to be determined by the economic uncertainty prevailing.

A long period of prosperity is more likely to strengthen the conservative values of the Alberta farmer, and hence such a long period of prosperity would tend to be detrimental to the development and future prospects of a socialist party.

The prosperity argument is useful in explaining the later years of Social Credit success and CCF failure, but it is not a complete explanation. Other factors must be considered. The oil boom did not begin until 1947, and the war-time prosperity did not

fully offset fears, still prevalent in 1944, of a post-war depression or recession similar to the one which followed the First World War. Thus, even if the post-1947 period can be written off with a traditional "prosperity" explanation, the 1940 and 1944 elections require some further elaboration. The 1940 election in particular warrants examination, as the Social Credit machine was almost certainly not so well entrenched in 1940 as it was in later years; and more importantly, Aberhart was apparently vulnerable, because of his lack of success in implementing social credit policies, because of the back-benchers revolt he had faced, because of the increase in taxes and imposition of an unpopular sales tax, and because of the damage that had been done to the province's credit.

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Why wasn't Aberhart defeated in the 1940 election? And why didn't the CCF replace him, or at least become a major challenger?

To turn to the first question, Aberhart had been under fire from the left and the right outside the party, as well as from the Social Credit purists within the party. From the time he formed the government in 1935, his fiscal policy had been orthodox, and no social credit measures had yet been introduced. In 1937, Aberhart was strongly criticized by a large group within his own caucus for his failure to implement social credit schemes.[1] He was severely challenged on this issue, weathering the storm only by capitulating and agreeing to introduce social credit legislation. The legislation,

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[1] For a more complete story of the back-benchers insurgency, see C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), especially Chapters 6 and 7.

about a dozen bills in total, was nearly all either disallowed by the federal government or declared ultra vires by the courts.[2]

In the 1940 election--"one of the fiercest that Alberta has ever experienced"[3]--the Aberhart government faced stiff opposition on two fronts. It was attacked from the right by a unified opposition for its radicalism--its attempt (albeit unsuccessful) to implement social credit, which threatened the established interests and allegedly damaged the province's reputation in the finanacial world; it was attacked from the left by the CCF for not being radical enough, for economic orthodoxy, and for its failure to fulfill its promise to deal with the problems of depression and debt; and it was attacked from both left and right for its threat to civil liberties, most notably its infamous Press Bill.

Essentially, however, the 1940 election boiled down to a polarized fight between Aberhart and an anti-Aberhart coalition. The CCF, largely ignored by the press, was only marginally significant, and in the end it attracted only the hard-core socialist vote. Aberhart's main opposition was from the right-wing Unity or Independent candidate (sometimes referred to as the People's League). The Unity campaign developed because of a growing distaste for Aberhart, especially among the more conservative elements of society, and a concern with the direction in which he was taking Alberta--a concern so strong that former political enemies were able to submerge their differences almost completely in a stop-Aberhart movement.

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[2]For a complete story, see J.R. Mallory, Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954).

[3]L.H. Garstin, "Social Credit's Five Years in Alberta," Dalhousie Review, Vol. 20 (July, 1940), p. 153.

The movement began well before the election. "As early as 1937 the Liberals, Conservatives and United Farmers began to draw together and eventually formed the United Party or People's League."[4] The first clear indication of Unity strength was the Lethbridge byelection of December, 1937, in which a Unity candidate defeated the Social Credit candidate 4,100 to 3,300.

The people's League was an alliance of anti-Social Credit electors organized by Capt. H.G. Scott, a former Calgary police magistrate who was dismissed on Aberhart's orders. The People's League was especially favored by Conservatives and had "the support of some influential U.F.A. farmers in unofficial positions who belong to the right wing of the U.F.A. movement, and are distrustful of the C.C.F."[5] Probably because they were the Official Opposition and the most likely successor if Aberhart failed, the Liberals were at first much less enthusiastic about a Unity movement. However, by the time of the election, their antipathy to Aberhart was so great that they too joined the Unity movement; in only one riding a Liberal ran against an Independent.[6] The Independents declared they were running "so that Alberta may elect a common sense and decent government"[7] (presumably meaning economic orthodoxy), and for the "restoration of democratic government and preservation of civil liberties"[8]

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[4] Ibid., p. 153.

[5] T.L. Bain, "The Situation in Alberta," Canadian Forum, Vol. 17 (July, 1937), p. 120.

[6] Edmonton Journal, March 7, 1940.

[7] Ibid., March 7, 1940.

[8] Ibid., March 11, 1940.

(opposition to th[illegible]ress Bill).

The challenge from the left was considerably less effective. One of the main planks in the CCF program was the nationalization of natural resources--an issue far less likely in those pre-oil boom days than today to stir great public excitement. On the question of the war effort, tha Alberta CCF followed the federal line, generally supporting Canadian involvement but demanding "conscription of wealth."[9] Social Credit, on the other hand, was unequivocally behind the war effort.

Social Credit, standing on its record, was under almost constant attack by the press, perhaps as much as in 1935. The CCF was largely ignored by the press (undoubtedly to its detriment) with attention focused on the Aberhart and anti-Aberhart forces.

In the end, Aberhart managed to retain power, but with a greatly reduced majority. Social Credit strength was cut to 36 seats while the Independents took 19. Even more significantly, the popular vote for Unity very nearly equalled that of Social Credit. The CCF polled only 11 per cent of the vote and failed to win a single seat.

The CCF was subjected to some criticism from Unity candidates for "permitting the Social Credit victory" by failing to respond to a Unity invitation to join the anti-Aberhart movement.[10] Perhaps the 11 per cent CCF vote, if it had been combined with a Unity vote, would have defeated Aberhart. However, the CCF would hardly have regarded an alliance with the rightists as very desirable. Nor is it

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[9] Ibid., March 9, 1940.

[10] Interview with Elmer Roper, January 12, 1973.

at all certain that such an alliance would have succeeded. Roper, for one, is not convinced that the CCF organization could have defeated Aberhart by joining Unity. In his view, many people who voted CCF in 1940 were opposed to the Unity candidates, and a majority might very well have gone Social Credit if the CCF had not run as a separate party.[11]

How was Aberhart able to retain enough support to form another majority government in the face of his legislative failures, a unified opposition from the right, and an attack (admittedly not too strong) from the left?

One of the chief reasons was that Aberhart had been able to defuse the opposition within his own party by introducing a series of bills dealing with debt and finance. Aberhart could not be held responsible for the fact that they were never enacted. Indeed, disallowance by the courts and federal government gave Aberhart an enemy to attack, and he was able to present himself once again as the champion of the exploited "little man" in the west against the "eastern interests."

Secondly, Aberhart was probably helped by the onset of war. The depression was substantially ended, and the first effects of wartime prosperity were beginning to be noticed by March, 1940. Moreover, the fact that Aberhart was fully behind the war effort (in contrast to the ambivalent position of the CCF), may have increased his standing with the voters.

Finally, rural overrepresentation aided Social Credit. The Unity vote nearly equalled that of Social Credit, yet Unity won

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[11] Ibid.

only half as many seats, in part because Unity strength was concentrated in Calgary and Edmonton and Social Credit in the rural areas. The Social Credit vote was considerably below 50 per cent, yet Social Credit won nearly two-thirds of the seats.

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All this helps explain the success of Aberhart, but does not explain the dismal performance of the CCF. On the surface, the CCF lack of success seems to lend weight to the theory that there was a lack of potential for a socialist party in Alberta, since the CCF polled no more than what the UFA had in 1935--only 11 per cent. The 1940 vote for the CCF was probably the hard-core socialist vote; it seems likely that a good deal of potential CCF vote remained with Social Credit--a more understandable result if both parties are seen as populist. Though the CCF probably could not have won the election, it is very possible some of the anti-Aberhart sentiment could have been better exploited to CCF advantage in 1940. To assess this, let us examine what factors in the 1940 election campaign and in the years between the 1935 and 1940 elections militated against the CCF.

One of the problems faced by the CCF in 1940 was the polarized nature of the campaign, which focused attention on the Aberhart and anti-Aberhart forces. The CCF at that time was not an extremely visible or potent force on the national scene, which undoubtedly made it even more difficult for the CCF to obtain publicity and full recognition at the provincial level.

With the disallowance issue, Aberhart was again able to

appeal to the non-socialist but potential CCF supporter--the "little man"--with his populist, anti-eastern, anti-establishment approach. Moreover, these potential supporters, uncertain of the CCF, were likely more influenced by Aberhart's anti-socialist rhetoric than they would have been if one of the old-line parties had made such an appeal.

The CCF's ambiguous stand on the war may also have hurt it. Indeed, one observer saw it as the crucial factor, stating that "the C.C.F. got no showing, probably because of its attitude toward the war."[12]

The issues which the CCF chose to focus on--nationalization of resources, for example--were not as effective under the circumstances as a number of other issues which a socialist party might have highlighted. The charge has been made that the party lacked leadership with sound political instinct--and the choice of issues lends some credence to this charge.

Lipset suggests one reason the CCF had difficulty making a credible case against Social Credit in Alberta--the seeming lack of ideological purity of the Saskatchewan CCF in its attempts before 1938 to ally with Social Credit as well as other groups.

> The Alberta C.C.F., which was attacking the Social Credit government in that province as a fraudulent reform administration that did not actually fight big business, found the ground removed from beneath it by the alliance of the Saskatchewan party.[13]

There is one other consideration, perhaps not as crucial but of some importance, which raises again our main theme--the significance of the CCF-UFA link. It was not just until the 1935 election that

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[12]Garstin, "Social Credit's Five Years in Alberta," p. 153.

[13]S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 113.

the UFA-CCF association was detrimental to the CCF; for several years after the election, indeed almost until the 1940 election, the organizational work of the CCF was retarded, to the detriment of the movement, by its association with the UFA. To illustrate this, let us examine CCF activities between the two elections.

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The total defeat of both labor and the UFA in the 1935 provincial election gave impetus to those who favored a more centralized form of CCF organization, though it was several years before a unified structure was finally achieved. The first move took place within two weeks of the election, when the provincial council decided to change the organizational structure of the CCF. The Economic Reconstruction Association was disbanded and CCF clubs, to be affiliated directly with the provincial council, were to be formed. For the first time, direct membership in the CCF was possible. When the total membership of clubs reached 1,000, a provincial federation of such clubs was to be formed. To many, the clubs represented more than merely another method of entry into the CCF. The Alberta Labor News expressed the opinion (and probably the hope) that "this may be the open door through which Alberta my set up one strong CCF body, such as exists in B.C., Saskatchewan and Ontario."[14]

Labor was particularly favorable to the formation of CCF clubs, as well as to the idea of a straight CCF party, and by the end of 1935, Edmonton's Membership-at-Large branch of the Canadian

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[14] Alberta Labor News, Sept. 7, 1935.

Labor Party had already organized several CCF clubs.[15]

The stumbling block to a unified CCF party, or even a CCF organized for provincial politics, remained the UFA affiliation. At its 1936 convention, the UFA voted to continue the affiliation, but took no steps to form a unified party. The uncertainty of the situation was unsatisfactory to those more active CCF supporters both inside and outside the UFA, as well as to those within the UFA on the other side of the issue who wanted to be free of the CCF. Pressure was building for clarification.

As a result, at the 1937 convention, affiliation with the CCF was again confirmed, and the officers were instructed to confer with other groups affiliated with the CCF in drafting a provincial program for presentation to the 1938 convention.[16] However, a resolution calling for UFA provincial nominees to run under the CCF banner was defeated; similarly, a resolution that they subscribe to the CCF platform was defeated.

The provincial council of the CCF set to work almost immediately and by mid-February had completed a draft provincial platform and a draft constitution to govern the operations of the CCF in the province, which were circulated to all UFA locals, Labor Party branches and CCF clubs. The program was a socialist document which embodied the principles of the Calgary Manifesto; and the constitution provided for the co-ordination under the CCF of all the political activities of the three Alberta organizations affiliated

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[15] Ibid., Dec. 14, 1935.

[16] Elmer E. Roper, "Alberta Farmers in Convention," Canadian Forum, Vol. 17 (March, 1938), pp. 408-9.

with the Federation.[17]

The plan was to have the provincial convention of the three bodies endorse the program. This the Labor Party did at its convention in late March, when it voted to continue its affiliation with the CCF.[18] The CCF Club convention in July similarly endorsed the platform and in a radical mood expressed its obvious impatience with the UFA foot-dragging on political action by agreeing that the CCF would participate in provincial and federal elections.

> The provincial executive of the Clubs was instructed to proceed with the organization of every federal and provincial riding in the province in the event of the UFA convention failing to agree to participate in CCF political action in both provincial and federal fields.[19]

The UFA convention of 1938 was not nearly so decisive, much to the chagrin of the CCF activists. The convention debated at length the question of political activity, finally agreeing to continue its affiliation with the CCF for federal purposes; but neither the proposed provincial program nor the draft constitution came before the convention. The question of CCF participation in provincial politics remained unresolved. The situation remained as before.[20]

The decision (or rather lack of clear-cut decision) brought a sharp reaction from William Irvine, president of the CCF clubs, who stated in his column in the People's Weekly that "there is no earthly reason why the CCF arrangement isn't as good in Alberta as

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[17]The entire program and constitution are printed in the Feb. 20, 1937 issue of the People's Weekly.

[18]People's Weekly, April 3, 1937.

[19]Ibid., July 10, 1937.

[20]Roper, "Alberta Farmers in Convention," pp. 408-9.

in the Dominion as a whole."

> For nearly three years we have waited almost inactive in rural areas in the hope that the UFA would complete the federation set-up of the CCF in provincial as well as federal matters. This however is not to be.[21]

Irving therefore urged CCF supporters to form CCF clubs in rural areas, not in opposition to the UFA, but to fill the vacuum created by the politically moribund UFA.

> Please do not get the idea that the C.C.F. is organizing against the U.F.A. or against Social Credit. We are organizing for a new order of society.[22]

Under the urging of Irvine, the CCF Club convention of March, 1938, agreed to organize the province for CCF action in provincial politics, although with the added condition that they seek close co-operation with both the Labor Party and the UFA. Considerable support was also expressed for a single CCF party to replace the federation.[23] The plan by the club to organize the province received the blessing of the national council in mid-summer, 1938, and the CCF clubs continued their organizational work through 1938 and into 1939.

For the UFA, the time for a clear-cut decision was obviously overdue. At the 1939 convention in January, the UFA executive recommended withdrawal from political action (unlike the three previous years when there had been no executive recommendation). With this guidance, the delegates voted overwhelmingly to end the UFA affiliation to the CCF and become once again a purely economic

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[21] People's Weekly, Jan. 29, 1938.

[22] Ibid., Jan. 29, 1938.

[23] Ibid., April 2, 1938.

organization.[24]

Though there may have been some anxiety over whether or not UFA members would continue to support the CCF, the general feeling among the CCF activists seems to have been one of relief, for as the People's Weekly remarked just before the convention, "indecision on this point for the past three years has had an undoubted effect in retarding organization work."[25]

Several months later, the People's Weekly reaffirmed this view with the editorial observation that "most of the work of organizing the CCF in Alberta has been done since January of this year when the UFA clarified the situation by going out of politics."[26]

This comment and others similar indicate that the UFA was indeed a brake on CCF activity, and that the confusion caused by the uncertain status of the CCF in provincial politics retarded the growth of that movement in Alberta, although the extent to which the UFA was responsible for the CCF's difficulties from 1935 to 1939 is not easy to gauge precisely.

In any event, after the UFA withdrawal, the CCF in Alberta was composed of two groups, CCF clubs and the Labor Party, both of which had already approved the CCF program and constitution; and since they were both generally favorably disposed toward unified political action, they moved rapidly in that direction. In the summer of 1939, the two groups held a joint convention, formed a

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[24] Ibid., Jan. 28, 1939.

[25] Ibid., Jan. 14, 1939.

[26] Ibid., Jan. 29, 1939.

single political organization and chose Elmer Roper as president and former MLA Chester Ronning as their leader.[27] A CCF organization to contest provincial politics in Alberta had been brought into existence at last, seven years after the Calgary conference and four years after the UFA's crushing defeat.

The UFA's inability for three years to clarify its own position clearly hampered the development of the CCF in Alberta. The problems which arose for the CCF, and which were never clearly solved until the UFA withdrew its affiliation in 1939, were a lack of central direction, an inability to organize the CCF per se in the rural areas, and a confusion of status regarding nominees, platforms and programs of the three affiliates.

The delay in organizing was undoubtedly one factor working against the CCF in 1940, which tends to support the argument of this thesis that political circumstances were of great importance in preventing the development of a socialist party in Alberta.

To sum up, the single most important factor preventing CCF success in Alberta in 1940 was the fact that Aberhart was in power and was able to retain the support of many people who, in the absence of Social Credit, might very well have been CCF supporters. He was able to do this by presenting himself as the representative and spokesman of the average Albertan against his traditional enemies--the east, financial interests, and so on. However, it is difficult to believe this is a complete explanation, for undoubtedly Aberhart's credibility must have suffered somewhat by his reluctance to introduce social credit legislation and--notwithstanding disallowance--his

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[27] Ibid., Aug. 5, 1939.

ultimate failure. Surely some left-wing Social Credit supporters must have found their faith severely tested and must have been at least potential converts to a strong and viable socialist party.

Clearly the CCF failure in 1940 was not due simply to Aberhart's overwhelming charisma. The CCF also faced some serious weaknesses and problems of its own--its stand on the war, its lack of a dramatic issue, its damaged credibility because of the Saskatchewan party, its lack of visibility and recognition, and perhaps most important, its lack of preparation because of the inhibiting effect of its association with the UFA.

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In a study of Social Credit success and CCF failure in Alberta, the 1944 election also requires some explanation beyond the prosperity argument, as the oil boom had not yet occurred.

What needs to be considered is, firstly, the resurgence of Social Credit to a position of undisputed dominance under Ernest Manning, who succeeded Aberhart on the latter's death in 1943; and secondly, the relatively strong showing of the CCF.

Before the August, 1944 election, there was some hope (even expectation) in the party that Alberta would follow Saskatchewan in electing a CCF government (the Saskatchewan victory had occurred only two months before). In fact, Social Credit re-established itself without doubt as the dominant party, taking 50 per cent of the vote and the vast majority of seats. The CCF did improve its position markedly, moving into second place with 25 per cent of the vote, although electing only two members--one from Edmonton

and one from Calgary. (This subsequently proved to be the peak of CCF success in Alberta.)

The Unity opposition collapsed, receiving substantially fewer votes than the CCF, though it elected three members. What happened was that Manning had undercut Unity by moving the Social Credit party right, and "many of the 95,000 Independents of 1940 had become the Social Creditors of 1944."[28]

For our purposes, three questions arise from this. Why did the CCF do so well in the election? Why did it not do better? And why did this support, which many expected to continue growing, in fact drop off?

The CCF did comparatively well in 1944 for a number of somewhat interrelated reasons. To the extent that a polarization occurred, it involved the CCF and Social Credit. Manning's swing to the right not only undercut the right-wing opposition but created at least a partial vacuum on the left into which the CCF could move. Thus the CCF became the major opposition to Social Credit, and the CCF was no longer ignored, as it has been in 1940.

Secondly, the CCF was experiencing the benefits of a "success syndrome." Growing support across Canada in the two years or so before the 1944 election had made the CCF more visible in Alberta and had given it an image of success. Federally, the CCF in 1942 had defeated a former Prime Minister in a by-election, and in the fall of 1943 had actually topped the opinion polls; the party had made remarkable gains in the Ontario provincial election of 1943,

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[28] Morris C. Shumiatcher, "Alberta Election," Canadian Forum, Vol. 24 (Sept., 1944), p. 128.

nearly winning a plurality of seats; and in Saskatchewan, the CCF had just formed the government two months before the Alberta election. In Alberta, the party had achieved its first electoral success in a 1942 by-election which surprised even the victorious candidate, Elmer Roper (who, incidentally, then became party leader).

The growing strength of the CCF nationally has been adequately explained by Young,[29] among others. Briefly, the more important reasons were the disruption of established patterns and the rising expectations engendered by the war, a fear that the end of the war would see an end of prosperity and a return to recession or depression, and evidence of the viability of economic planning in wartime, which the CCF argued could and should be carried over into peacetime for social purposes.

The CCF in Alberta was also aided by the fact that it had had four more years to organize after 1940 free of the UFA, and good use was made of those four years. One source claims that membership in 1944 hit a peak of 12,000,[30] an all-time high for the Alberta party. Moreover, according to Roper, the party was "in good financial shape" at this time.[31] A good deal of the credit for the growth of the CCF during this period belongs to William Irvine. Irvine, who was defeated in the 1935 election and again in 1940, was employed as a full-time national organizer in Alberta from 1940 to 1945.

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[29] W.D. Young, Anatomy of a Party (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), see especially Chapter 5.

[30] Tape recorded interview with two former members of the Alberta CCF executive, Ernie Cook and Henry Young. Microtape 70:285, Provincial Archives of Alberta.

[31] Roper Interview, Jan. 12, 1973.

(He was elected as an MP from B.C. in the 1945 election). Irvine's reputation combined with his organizational ability undoubtedly helped the CCF considerably.

During that period, the People's Weekly, unofficial voice of the CCF, was supplemented by a weekly radio program--the air edition of the People's Weekly--in both Edmonton and Calgary. The radio programs, which promoted the CCF message and were paid for by listerner contributions were, in Roper's opinion, "probably our best means of communication."[32]

Finally, the fact that the CCF was represented in the legislature before the 1944 election, as it had not been before the 1940 election, must have helped the party, if only in terms of increased voter recognition.

The question this raises is why the CCF did not do even better--indeed, why it did not defeat Social Credit. In a post-election analysis, Shumiatcher stated that for several reasons "a result paralleling the recent Saskatchewan landslide could not be expected."[33]

For one thing, he argued, the Manning-Aberhart administration had not earned the contempt or distrust of the people, as was the case with the Liberal administration in Saskatchewan. Most Albertans considered the government "efficient" and "sound." Secondly, because of general prosperity, Alberta voters, unlike those of Saskatchewan were not so vitally concerned that the provincial government be active on its behalf. The third important difference was the fact

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Shumiatcher, "Alberta Election," p. 127.

that unlike Saskatchewan, Alberta was not represented by an old-line party, so that "even if dissatisfied with the attitude of the Federal government on debt legislation, Albertans realized that their rejection of the local Social Credit party would hardly be interpreted by Ottawa as a protest against Federal activity, as was the obvious case in Saskatchewan."[34]

To some extent, however, (perhaps a very significant extent), the problem was the nature of the CCF campaign, which "lacked the practical appeal of Tommy Douglas's approach in Saskatchewan." There was "too much abstract theory and not enough live ammunition."

> What practical talk there was on C.C.F. policy did not concern itself with markets, prices, farm produce, co-ops and health--which are matters in which Tommy Douglas knows the people of the Prairies to be interested. Instead, it was directed primarily to the nationalization of two industries--the Calgary Water Power Co. Ltd., and the Turner Valley Oil Industry.[35]

In Shumiatcher's view, the nationalization of power and the oil industry were simply not major concerns to the average voter at that time.

Finally (a point which has been touched on before), Shumiatcher attributes the lack of support for the CCF to some extent at least to the relative weakness of the co-operative movement in Alberta, where the membership was 120,000 compared to 210,000 in Saskatchewan.

To add to Shumiatcher's assessment, the fact that the CCF was clearly the alternative to Social Credit in 1944 had one negative aspect. Manning, particularly adept at anti-socialist rhetoric,

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[34] Ibid., p. 127.

[35] Ibid., p. 127.

focused his attack on the CCF and warned of the dangers of socialism. Having moved to the right, Social Credit could afford a rhetoric which alienated the left.

> In the Alberta general election of 1944 the struggle against socialism conveniently replaced the struggle for social credit. On this issue the government was returned with a larger majority than ever before. If it lost some of its radical supporters to the C.C.F., it gained many more from the business community, which was now convinced, with good reason, that Manning's social credit was no menance to private enterprise but the best protection against the growing strength of the socialist C.C.F. The menace of socialism became and remained the staple of the official Alberta social credit propaganda.[36]

This does not necessarily indicate that Alberta was substantially more right-wing or more inherently anti-socialist than Saskatchewan. It is true that businessmen and other right-wingers would oppose the CCF because of its socialism; but if the average farmer and worker regarded the CCF as a "socialist menace," it may have been largely because Manning repeatedly said it was so. Manning was probably able to use the charge more effectively than a Liberal or Conservative politician would have been. Social Credit support in Alberta had originally come from the same type of people who in Saskatchewan voted CCF, and while the radical socialist element turned to the CCF in 1944, much of the radical populist element remained with Social Credit. The farmers in the main were undoubtedly opposed to certain aspects of pure socialist doctrine--notably the nationalization of land. But this was not a plank in the Alberta CCF platform in either 1940 or 1944. Indeed, the CCF promised farmers security of tenure. It took a Manning to heighten the populist farmer's consciousness of a "socialist threat" in the CCF.

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[36] Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta, p. 206.

The CCF declined in membership and voter support after 1944 for many of the same reasons that it did not do as well as expected in the 1944 election. Manning proved an able and efficient administrator as well as a skillful politician. The oil boom brought a prosperity which both aided Social Credit and detracted from the CCF appeal. Moreover, the provincial decline to some extent merely reflected a general decline in CCF fortunes in Canada. Mackenzie King's sharp move to the left during the war had undercut the CCF potential federally, and the absence of the post-war recession that had been feared, weakened the party both federally and in Alberta. Provincially, Manning's consistent attack on socialism provided him with a convenient election issue and placed the CCF on the defensive. Perhaps most significantly, Manning was able to retain a good deal of his populist base of support (support which the CCF needed), partly because of his religious and puritanical appeal and partly because of Social Credit's populist origins, while at the same time his move to the right on economic issues gained him support from the established interests.

However, other factors also played some part in the CCF lack of success. One handicap faced by the CCF in Alberta was that it never became the Official Opposition. Even in 1944, when it polled the second largest number of votes, the Independents elected three members to form the Opposition. Thus, although the CCF became the focus of the Social Credit attack, it could not present itself as the clear alternative to the government. We do not say that the CCF would likely have moved on to defeat Social Credit if it had been the Official Opposition, merely that it was one additional factor

further decreasing CCF prospects of improving its political position.

One observer of the CCF has ventured the assessment that the CCF missed whatever opportunity it might have had to effectively challenge Social Credit in the fifteen or so years after 1944 because it lacked leadership with "political moxie;" because the leadership tended to focus on the wrong issues, concentrating for example on European issues to the detriment of more salient provincial issues.[37] This reinforces the similar point made by Shumiatcher. Saskatchewan's first CCF premier, T.C. Douglas, also holds the view, according to an MLA who served under him, that one important reason the Alberta party failed to make headway in the 1940's was its obsession with doctrinal matters, as opposed to the far more practical approach he followed in Saskatchewan.

To sum up the post-1935 period, a good case can be made that the matter of socialism was not the crucial element in the CCF failure. To the extent that it became a significant issue, it can be attributed largely to Manning's ability to appeal to certain latent concerns and fears in the province's farmers and workers--in part his ability to manufacture an issue. It is undoubtedly true the pure socialist vote was small--certainly not large enough to defeat Social Credit and probably not large enough to permit the CCF to make any significant inroads. However, the same was true of Saskatchewan. The CCF came to power by appealing to the economic and social concerns of the average citizen, by stressing practical issues and practical solutions--not by stressing doctrinaire socialism and theoretical considerations. The Saskatchewan CCF used this approach

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[37]This opinion was expressed by Alberta NDP leader Grant Notley in an interview on Jan. 15, 1973.

far more effectively than did the Alberta CCF. More importantly, Social Credit had already established itself as the champion of the average citizen, with his economic and social concerns, thus effectively blocking the CCF in its appeal to this group.

The UFA, Social Credit and the CCF were all founded in large measure on the support of the same type of people, and had to appeal to the same people for votes. Social Credit, appearing as a new populist movement, was able to capture that support from the UFA in 1935 because of the crisis situation and the UFA inability to cope with it. The CCF was not able to supplant Social Credit, largely because there was no need for a new protest movement in a time of prosperity. That brings us back to 1935. The chief reason for the failure of the CCF in later years was its failure to implant itself in 1935, and that was largely the result of the circumstantial factors discussed in Chapter V. Political circumstances also militated against the CCF after 1935, and whatever slight chance the CCF might have had to replace Social Credit could not materialize because of those factors.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation failed to establish itself and consistently failed to make a significant impact on Alberta politics. One of the most popular explanations for this failure, indeed, probably the most common explanation, is that the peculiar nature of Alberta's social and economic conditions militated against a socialist movement and prevented the CCF from establishing or developing in Alberta. In other words, given the nature of Alberta society, the failure of the CCF was virtually inevitable. In our view, such a position is difficult to sustain. The CCF failure can more properly be attributed to political circumstances which facilitated the rise of Social Credit and effectively blocked the CCF movement.

It is difficult to sustain the argument that the CCF failure was inevitable because of the prevailing social and economic conditions, particularly in light of the similarities between Saskatchewan, where the CCF thrived, and Alberta, where it did not. While it is true that Saskatchewan's economy was more heavily dependent on wheat, that the co-operative movement was more pervasive in Saskatchewan, and that the effects of the depression were more severe there, the differences between the two provinces were far less striking than were the similarities. Alberta too was a wheat province, had a developing co-op movement with a long history, and was second only

to Saskatchewan in terms of impact of the depression. These factors favoring socialism certainly were not absent from Alberta, they were only somewhat less pronounced. The difference was a matter of degree, not of kind.

Moreover, in some respects Alberta should have been even more susceptible to a left-wing or radical political appeal than Saskatchewan was. To give one example, the labor movement was much stronger in Alberta than Saskatchewan in 1935, with union membership more than double that of Saskatchewan. On the whole, organized workers usually provide a base of support for a socialist party.

Alberta's radical past lends further weight to the thesis that the CCF had a potential for success in Alberta. Radical political activity in the early 1900's in the labor movement, and the later electoral activity of the more orthodox labor parties provide some evidence of fertile ground for a socialist party. Even more important, the widespread support by Alberta farmers of early agrarian movements--economic and political--reinforces this contention.

The political activity of the Non-Partisan League and the success of the United Farmers of Alberta provincially further point out the radical predisposition of Alberta's population. While it may be argued that these movements were not socialistic (though that is difficult to sustain in the case of the Non-Partisan League), they embodied some of the fundamental principles on which a socialist movement must be based (for example, co-operation), and from which a socialist movement might very well spring.

Under the impact of the depression, Albertans were again searching for a new and radical political explanation and solution.

Why could they not have turned to the CCF, instead of Social Credit, for answers? It is true Social Credit was particularly adapted to Alberta, a province which had shown a predisposition toward unorthodox political and economic solutions, in particular non-party movements and monetary reform theories. However, this thesis rejects the proposition that the success of Social Credit demonstrated a lack of radical sentiment in Alberta, or an absence of the kind of support which could have sustained the CCF.

The evidence is directly to the contrary. Clearly, Social Credit was viewed as a radical alternative to the government. Moreover, the average voter did not appear to make a sharp distinction between Social Credit and the CCF; indeed, in both Saskatchewan and Alberta, many voters could see little difference between the two movements and very likely would have supported the joining of forces had it not been for the opposition of the leadership of both parties.

Moreover, in some respects the two parties were similar. In many respects, Social Credit like the CCF was a radical movement, advocating some rather drastic measures to counter the depression. Social Credit's 1935 election promises of a form of guaranteed annual income (the dividend), a just price for the farmer's produce, and a debt moratorium, were all radical measures to which a socialist could subscribe as practical steps, even if he regarded Social Credit monetary theory as half-baked. And clearly such ideas were as dangerously radical to the established interests as they were attractive to the debt-ridden farmer in the depression years in Alberta. The Social Credit platform must have seemed especially radical in its promise of direct provincial action, when contrasted to the UFA "radical"

platform which consisted of recommending that the federal government adopt radical measures.

While the CCF analysis of social ills was more profound than that of Social Credit, the two movements essentially had to appeal for support to the same type of person--the dissatisfied and the have-not.

Taking all that into consideration, the fact that Alberta could give birth to a Social Credit movement indicated it might easily have sustained a socialist CCF movement if political circumstances had been different--not the contrary.

In explaining the failure of the CCF and the success of Social Credit in Alberta, this thesis attributes a great deal of importance to political circumstances or "accidents of history."

In terms of the Alberta CCF, the crucial circumstance of politics was the fact that the CCF was associated with the UFA, at a time when a UFA government was in power and in public disfavor. This presented the CCF with a dilemma which proved fatal. It could not run against the government, yet could not persuade the government to adopt its program. The CCF could not present itself as an alternative to the government, could not present a competing socialist program, could not even organize (since the CCF per se was not running in the election), and yet suffered from the UFA government's handling of the depression and the government scandals. This clearly left the door open to Social Credit to run as the alternative to the government, something the CCF in Alberta could not do.

Even after 1935, the CCF-UFA affiliation continued, making

it difficult for the CCF to organize for three or four crucial years. Moreover, the fact that the CCF was fighting Social Credit, rather than an old-line party, in the post-1935 period, complicated its problems immensely. Unlike the Saskatchewan CCF, which was competing primarily against an old-line party, the Alberta CCF could not set up a "We/They" dichotomy, because Social Credit was also regarded as a people's party. The fact that Social Credit had the trust of the "little man" added one more difficulty for the CCF--it probably made the Social Credit "socialist scare" tactic more credible than a similar ploy employed by an old-line party such as the Saskatchewan Liberals.

Another circumstance of politics which militated against the CCF was simply the lack of effective leadership with an astute political sense, against a very astute Social Credit leadership. This was true in 1935 and in succeeding years.

Following from this, a case can be made that Aberhart played a crucial role in the triumph of Social Credit in Alberta, and that there would never have been a successful Social Credit movement in Alberta without him. Perhaps one of the key factors in explaining the political differences between Alberta and Saskatchewan was that Aberhart happened to live in Alberta. It is interesting to speculate whether it might have been Saskatchewan rather than Alberta which had a Social Credit government if Aberhart's radio program had originated in Regina instead of Calgary.

* * *

However, even if we accept that Albertans were predisposed

toward radical politics and that political circumstances seriously hampered CCF efforts, it does not follow that socialism would necessarily have been acceptable to Alberta's individualistic, property-owning farmers, or even to the laboring man. Indeed, a purely doctrinaire socialist appeal probably would have foundered even with much more favorable political circumstances--for example, probably even without an Aberhart movement or a tired UFA government in power.

The same can be said in Saskatchewan, however, for in both provinces, a majority of the farmers were not doctrinaire socialists, especially in terms of ownership of their own property. Nevertheless, in Saskatchewan a majority of farmers were eventually persuaded to accept the program of a socialist party, without full ideological support or commitment, and the same outcome could very well have resulted in Alberta. The crucial factor is the manner in which socialism is presented to the electorate, and the specific nature of the program.

Alberta had a radical, populist past which gave rise to two populist protest movements, the UFA and Social Credit. These movements gave expression to western resentment against the east, against exploitation and control by financial interests outside the province, against the federal government, and against the insecurity inherent in prairie farming. They also pointed up and embodied Alberta's predisposition toward radical unorthodox political and economic solutions.

Moreover, even in the most favorable circumstances, a CCF party that endorsed widespread nationalization, especially if that included nationalization of land, would almost certainly have failed.

It would have had to be modified form of socialism, as was adopted by the Saskatchewan CCF before it was able to make significant advances, which permitted private ownership of land and at least a limited degree of private enterprise.

The type of socialism which succeeded in Saskatchewan and which might very well have succeeded in Alberta if political circumstances had been different was a socialism which developed from and encouraged co-operative enterprise, which promoted welfare statism, security for the farmer and worker, and some degree of public ownership, and particularly for Alberta, which promised debt relief for farms and government control of finance and credit. In short, this thesis argues that a socialist party with a practical program geared to the needs of the people had potential for success in Alberta.

To say that Alberta farmers were suspicious of doctrinaire socialism may be quite true: to say that they could not have been persuaded to support the CCF, regardless of the type of socialist program it presented, simply cannot be demonstrated.

The assumption that the CCF in Alberta was doomed to failure cannot be substantiated. Indeed, a stronger case can be made that a program of modified socialism presented in a fashion which placed it in the mainstream of Alberta's political culture might just as easily have been successful in Alberta as the CCF was in Saskatchewan. The inability of the CCF in Alberta before 1935 to operate as an alternative to the government prevented this, and left a vacuum where a radical alternative to the government was needed--a vacuum which Social Credit easily filled. From that point on, the success of Social Credit during a long period of general prosperity, and CCF

leadership and organizational weakness, virtually blocked the development of a CCF movement capable of winning office in Alberta.

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APPENDIX

ELMER ROPER AND WILLIAM IRVINE

One of the important sources of information for this thesis was Elmer Roper, who was interviewed on January 12, 1973. Mr. Roper played a prominent role in the labor and socialist movements in Alberta for several decades. He was the owner and editor of the Alberta Labor News (the name was changed to People's Weekly in 1936), a labor-socialist newspaper. He was active in the Labor Party in Edmonton in the 1920's, and was one of the prime forces in affiliating the Labor Party to the CCF in the early 1930's. Active in the CCF from its founding, Mr. Roper was the first CCF representative elected to the Alberta legislature--in a by-election in 1942. At that point he was named leader of the CCF, a position he held for 15 years. He won re-election to the legislature in the general elections of 1944, 1948 and 1952 in the multiple-member riding of Edmonton, but was narrowly defeated in the 1955 election. Although out of the House, he remained as party leader until 1957. He came out of retirement in 1959 to run for mayor of Edmonton, a position he held until 1963.

One of Mr. Roper's close associates both politically and journalistic was William Irvine. Mr. Irvine was a key figure in the Non-Partisan League, the UFA, and the Alberta CCF. He was a Member of Parliament from 1921-1925 and 1926-1935, but was defeated in the Social Credit sweep of Alberta in 1935. Subsequently he was associate editor and regular contributor to the People's Weekly,

and for several years was a national organizer for the CCF in Alberta. He served one term as CCF MP, representing a B.C. riding from 1945-1949. Although he died several years ago, Mr. Irvine's political views were easily obtained from the issues of the People's Weekly, and from former colleagues.